

# Battles That Changed History

Some battles were turning points, not only in war, but in history itself, and we still talk about them today. You may have heard of marathons, Gettysburg, or someone who has “met his or her Waterloo.” Like these, the battles below changed the course of history.

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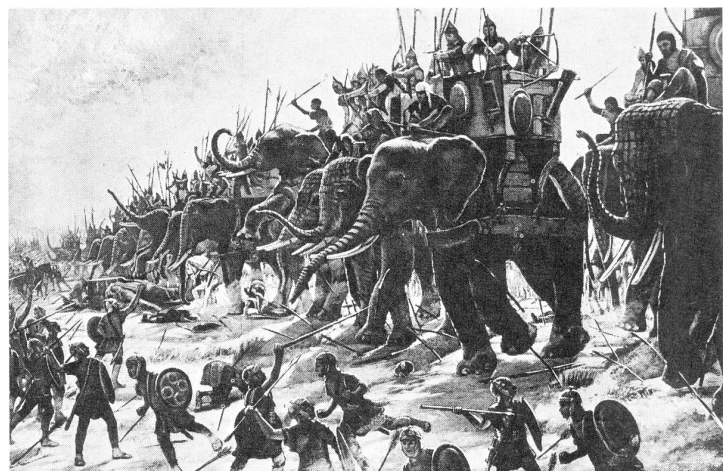
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# Battles That Changed History

## Battle of Zama

The **Battle of Zama**, fought around October 19, 202 BC, marked the final and decisive end of the Second Punic War. A Roman army led by Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus defeated a Carthaginian force led by the legendary commander Hannibal. Soon after this defeat on their home ground, the Carthaginian senate sued for peace, which was given to them by the Roman Republic on rather humiliating terms, ending the 17-year war.



The Battle of Zama by Henri-Paul Motte, 1890

### Prelude

Crossing the Alps, Hannibal reached the Italian peninsula in 218 BC and won several major victories against the Roman armies. Having failed to defeat Hannibal or drive him from Italy, the Romans changed strategy and decided to attack Carthage, forcing the Carthaginians to recall Hannibal. He was still in Italy, although confined to the south of the peninsula, when Scipio landed in Africa in 203 BC.<sup>[1]</sup>

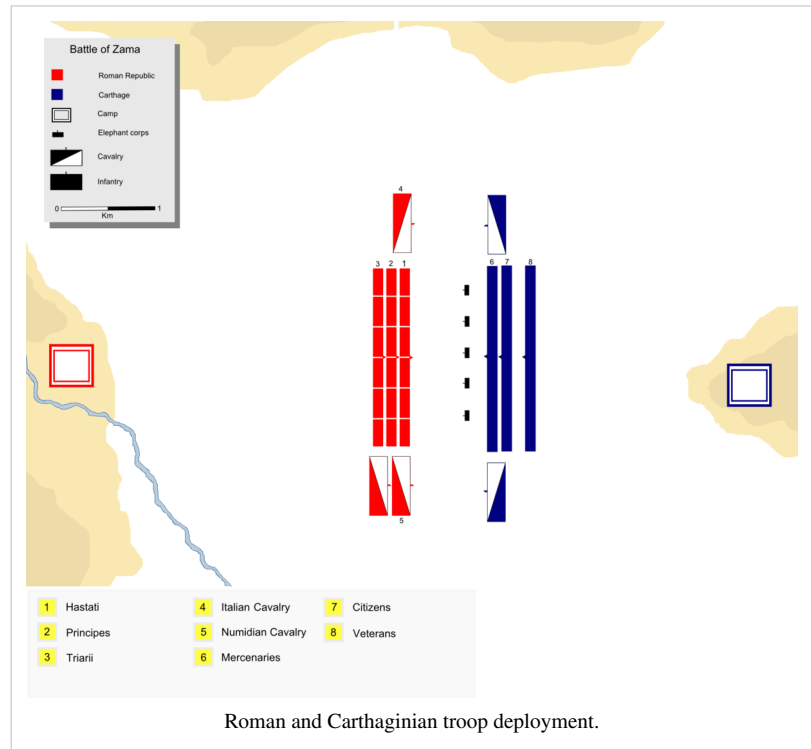
Following their decisive victory in Spain at the Battle of Ilipa in 206 BC, Iberia was secured by the Romans. In 205 BC, Scipio returned to Rome, where he was elected consul with a unanimous vote. Scipio, now powerful enough, proposed to end the war by directly invading the Carthaginian home land.<sup>[2]</sup>

The Senate initially opposed this ambitious design of Scipio, persuaded by Fabius Maximus that the enterprise was far too hazardous. However, Scipio and his supporters eventually convinced the Senate to ratify the plan, and Scipio was given the requisite authority to attempt the invasion.<sup>[3]:270</sup> Initially he received no levy troops, and he sailed to Sicily with a group of 7,000 heterogeneous volunteers.<sup>[4]:96</sup> Later, he obtained the authorization to employ also the regulars stationed in Sicily, which consisted mainly of the remnants of the 5th and 6th Legion, exiled to the island as a punishment for the humiliation they suffered in the Battle of Cannae.<sup>[4]:119</sup>

Scipio kept on reinforcing his troops with local defectors.<sup>[3]:271</sup> He landed at Utica, and defeated the Carthaginian army at the Battle of the Great Plains in 203 BC. The panicked Carthaginians felt that they had no other alternative than to offer peace to Scipio, who, having the authority, granted it with modest terms. According to the terms of the treaty signed between Scipio and Carthage, Carthage could keep its African territory, but would lose its overseas empire, by that time a *fait-accomplí*. Masinissa was to be allowed to expand Numidia into parts of Africa. Also, Carthage was to reduce its fleet and pay a war indemnity. The Roman senate ratified the agreement. The Carthaginian senate recalled Hannibal from Italy in 203 BC. Meanwhile, the Carthaginians breached the armistice agreement by capturing a stranded Roman fleet in the Gulf of Tunis and stripping it of supplies. The Carthaginians no longer believed a treaty advantageous, and rebuffed it under much Roman protest.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Troop deployment

Hannibal led an army composed of mercenaries, local citizens and veterans from his Italian campaigns, and Scipio led the already present Roman army of legionaries, along with a body of Numidian cavalry. The battle took place at Zama Regia, near Siliana 130 km south-west of the capital Tunis. Hannibal was first to march and reach the plains of Zama Regia, which were suitable for cavalry maneuvering. This also gave an upper edge in turn to Scipio who relied heavily on his Roman heavy cavalry and Numidian light cavalry. Hannibal deployed his troops facing northwest, while Scipio deployed his troops in front of the Carthaginian army facing southeast.<sup>[6]</sup>



Hannibal's army consisted of 45,000 infantry, 6,000 cavalry, and 80 war elephants, while Scipio had a total of 34,000 infantry and 6,000 cavalry.<sup>[7]</sup> Putting his experienced cavalry on the flanks, Hannibal aligned his troops in three straight lines behind his eighty war elephants. The first line consisted of mixed infantry of mercenaries from Gaul, Liguria, and Baleria. In his second line he placed the Carthaginian and Libyan citizen levies, while his veterans from Italy were placed in the third line.<sup>[8]</sup> Hannibal intentionally held back his third infantry line, in order to thwart Scipio's tendency to pin the Carthaginian center and envelop his opponent's lines, as he had previously done at the Battle of Ilipa.<sup>[5]</sup> Livy states that Hannibal deployed 4000 Macedonians in the second line, which is normally rejected as Roman propaganda, though T Dorey suggested that there might have been a seed of truth in the story if the Carthaginians had recruited a trivial number of mercenaries from Macedonia who had gone without official blessing.<sup>[9]</sup>

Scipio deployed his army in three lines: the first line was composed of the hastati, the second line of principes and the third line of the triarii. The stronger right wing was composed of the Numidian cavalry and commanded by Masinissa while the left wing was composed of the Italian cavalry under the command of Laelius. The greatest concern for Scipio was the elephants. He came up with an ingenious plan to take care of them.

Scipio knew that elephants could be ordered to charge forward, but they could only continue their charge in a straight line.<sup>[10]</sup> Scipio predicted that intentionally opening gaps in his troops would result in the elephants simply continuing between them, without harming any of his soldiers. Scipio created the lanes between the army regiments across the depth of his troops and hid them with maniples of skirmishers. The plan was that when the elephants charged these lanes would open allowing them to pass through the legionaries' ranks and be dealt with at the rear of the army.

Hannibal and the Carthaginians had relied on cavalry superiority in previous battles (e.g. Battle of Cannae), but Scipio, recognizing the importance, held the cavalry advantage at Zama. This was due in part to his raising of a new cavalry regiment in Sicily and careful courting of Masinissa as an ally.

Hannibal probably hoped that the combination of the war elephants and the depth of the first two lines would weaken and disorganize the Roman advance. This would have allowed him to complete a victory with his reserves in the third line and overlap Scipio's lines. Though this formation was indeed well-conceived, it failed to produce a Carthaginian victory. The two men are said to have met face-to-face before the battle.

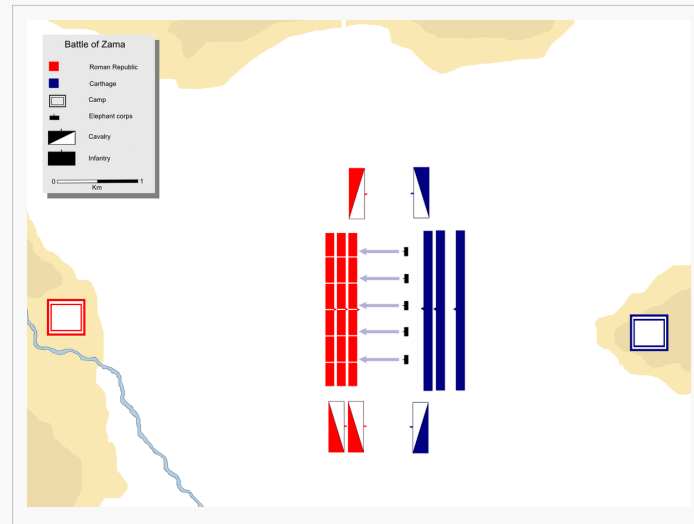
## The battle

At the outset of the battle, Hannibal unleashed his elephants and skirmishers against the Roman troops in order to break the cohesion of their lines and exploit the breaches that could be opened.<sup>[11]</sup> The attack was confronted by the Roman skirmishers. In addition, Scipio ordered the cavalry to blow loud horns to frighten the beasts, which partly succeeded, and several rampaging elephants turned towards the Carthaginian left wing and disordered it completely. Seizing this opportunity, Masinissa led his Numidian cavalry and charged at the Carthaginian left wing, also composed of Numidian cavalry, and was unknowingly lured off the field. Meanwhile, the rest of the elephants were carefully lured through the lanes and taken to the rear of the Roman army, where they were dealt with. Scipio's plan to neutralize the threat of the elephants had worked. Scipio's troops then fell back into traditional Roman battle formation. Laelius, the commander of Roman left wing, charged against the Carthaginian right. The Carthaginian cavalry, acting on the instructions of Hannibal, allowed the Roman cavalry to chase them so as to lure them away from the battlefield so that they wouldn't attack the Carthaginian armies in the rear.<sup>[12]</sup>

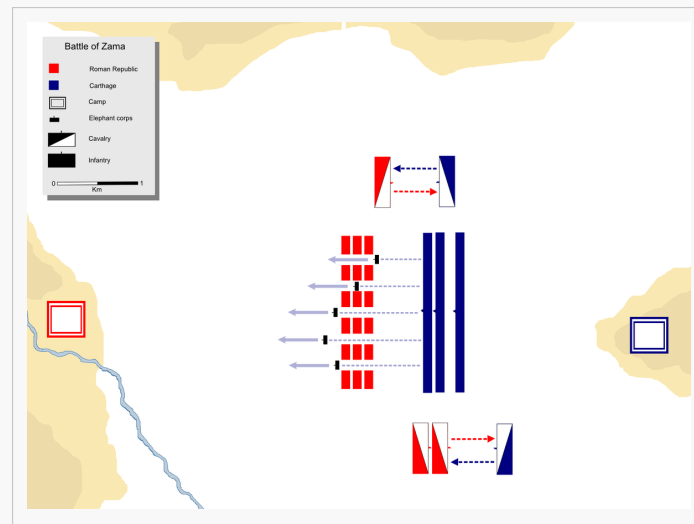
Scipio now marched with his center towards the Carthaginian center, which was under the direct command of Hannibal. Hannibal moved forward with only two lines and the third line of veterans was kept in reserve. After a close contest, the first line of Hannibal was pushed back by the Roman hastati.<sup>[10]</sup> Hannibal ordered his second line not to allow the first line in their ranks. The bulk of them managed to escape and to position themselves on the wings of the second line on Hannibal's instructions.<sup>[1]</sup> Hannibal now charged with his second line. A furious struggle ensued and the Roman hastati were pushed back with heavy losses. Scipio reinforced the hastati with the second line principes.<sup>[6]</sup>



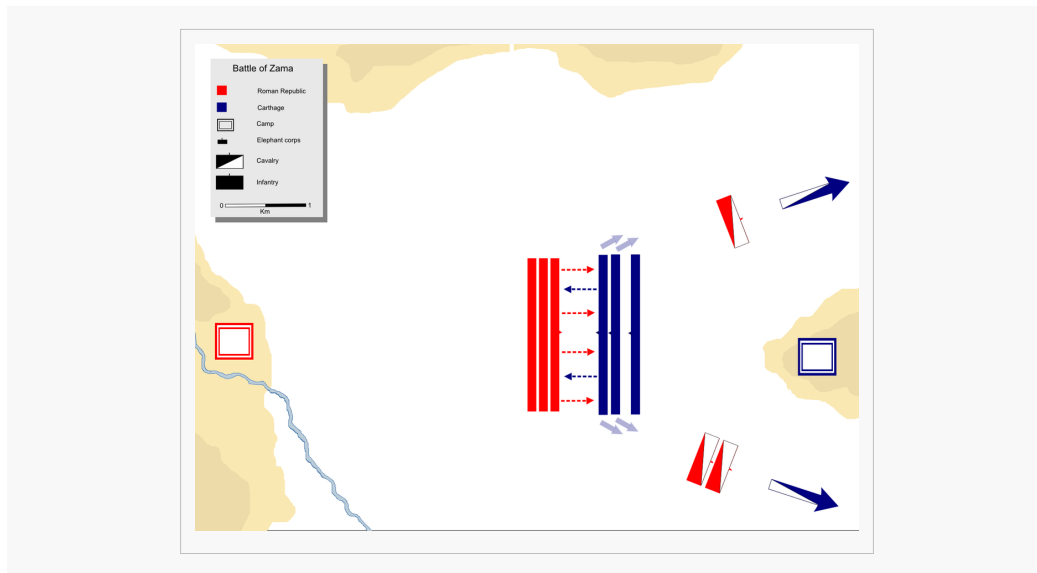
Meeting of Hannibal and Scipio at Zama (Charlotte Mary Yonge),  
1880



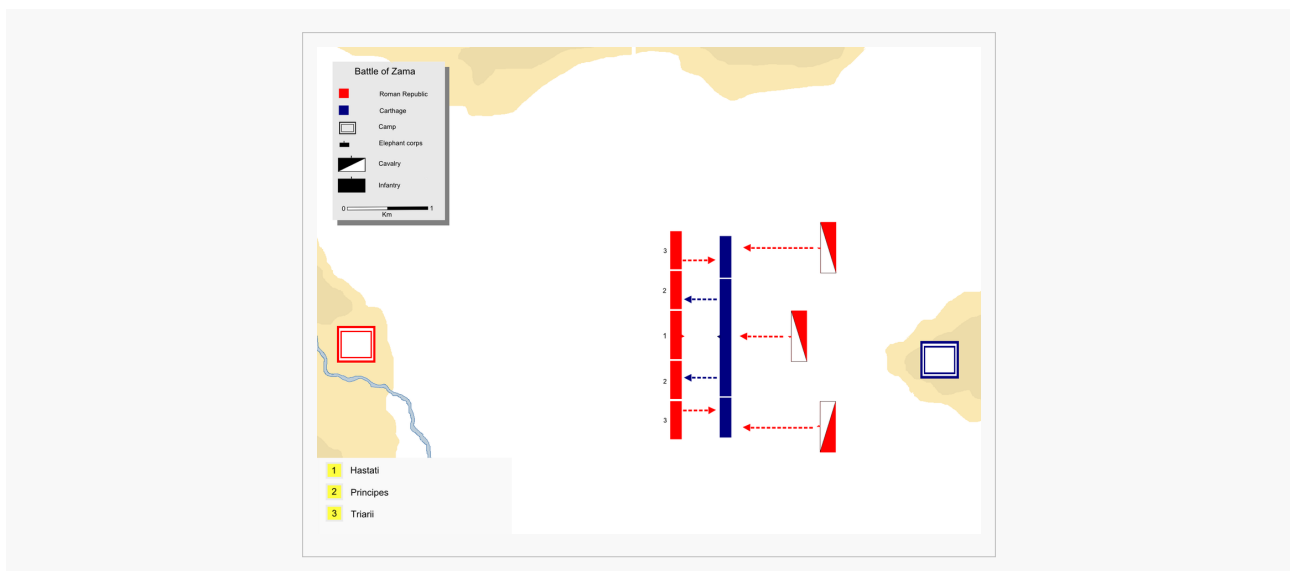
Hannibal starts the battle with his war elephants charging at Roman front. Scipio orders his cavalry to blow loud horns to terrify the charging elephants. The panicked elephants turn at the Carthaginian left wing and disorder it.



Roman right wing charges and routs the Carthaginian cavalry, followed by the Roman left wing routing the Carthaginian right wing. Remaining elephants are lured through the lanes and killed.



Carthaginian cavalry routed off the field. Scipio attacks Hannibal's first and second line of infantry and routs both lines.



Scipio and Hannibal rearrange their troops in a single line and battle remains stalemate until Roman cavalry returns and attacks Hannibal's infantry at the rear.

With this reinforcement the Roman front renewed their attack and defeated Hannibal's second line. Again, the second line was not allowed to merge with the third line and was forced to the wings along with the first line. Carthaginian cavalry carried out Hannibal's instructions well and there was no sign of Roman cavalry on the battlefield. Once they were far enough away, they turned and attacked the Roman cavalry but were routed in the end. At this point there was a pause in the battle as both sides redeployed their troops. Scipio played for time as he redeployed his troops in a single line with the hastati in the middle and the principes in the inner wings and the triarii on the outer wings. Hannibal waited for Scipio to attack. The resulting clash was fierce and bloody, with neither side achieving local superiority. However, Scipio was able to rally his men.<sup>[10]</sup> The battle finally turned into Roman favor as the Roman cavalry returned onto the battlefield and attacked the Carthaginian line from behind. The Carthaginian infantry was encircled and annihilated. Thousands of Carthaginians, including Hannibal, managed to escape the slaughter.<sup>[5]</sup> Hannibal experienced a major defeat that put an end to all resistance on the part of Carthage. In total, as many as 20,000 men of Hannibal's army were killed at Zama, while 20,000 were taken as prisoners. The Romans on the other hand, suffered as few as 2,500 dead.<sup>[13]</sup>

## Aftermath

Soon after Scipio's victory at Zama, the war ended, with the Carthaginian senate suing for peace. Unlike the treaty that ended the First Punic War, the terms Carthage acceded to were so punishing that it was never able to challenge Rome for supremacy of the Mediterranean again. Terms of the treaty bankrupted Carthage of any chance at military might in the future, although their economic recovery was quick because they did not have to pay an army of mercenaries to fight for them. One provision was that the Carthaginians were not allowed to make war without Roman consent. This allowed the Romans to establish a *casus belli* for the Third Punic War when the Carthaginians defended themselves from Numidian encroachments which the Romans would not stop.

When Rome waged a Third Punic War on Carthage 70 years later, the Carthaginians had little power, and could not even defeat the by-then very aged Masinissa in Africa. They could, however, organize a defense of their home city, which, after an extended siege, was captured and completely destroyed. Only 55,000 survived.<sup>[6]</sup>

## Notes

- [1] Davis, William Stearns, *Readings in Ancient History — Illustrative Extracts from the Sources*, p. 79, ISBN 1-4067-4833-1.
- [2] Livy, 28.40
- [3] Bagnall, Nigel, *The Punic Wars*.
- [4] Hart, Liddell, *Scipio*.
- [5] Delbrück, Hans, *History of the Art of War: Warfare in antiquity*, p. 393, ISBN 0-8032-9199-X.
- [6] Nardo, Don, *The battle of Zama*, p. 30, ISBN 1-56006-420-X.
- [7] Davis, Paul K (2001), *100 Decisive Battles: From Ancient Times to the Present*, Oxford University Press, p. 47, ISBN 0-19-514366-3, "Roman: 34,000 infantry and 6,000 cavalry. Commander: Publius Cornelius Scipio. Carthaginian: 45,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry. Commander: Hannibal Barca"
- [8] Frontinus, Sextus Julius (1925), Bennet, Charles E, ed., *Stratagemata*, Classical library, Loeb, p. 114, ISBN 0-674-99192-3, "...novissimos Italicos constituit, quorum et timebat fidem et segnitiam verebatur, quoniam plerosque eorum ab Italia invitos extraxerat".
- [9] Dorey, TA (1957), "Macedonian Troops at the Battle of Zama", *The American Journal of Philology*, **78**, p. 185–7.
- [10] Africanus, BH Liddell; Grant, Michael, *Greater Than Napoleon*, p. 263, ISBN 0-306-81363-7.
- [11] Scullard, Howard Hayes (1930), *Scipio Africanus in the second Punic war*, CUP Publisher Archive.
- [12] Goldsworth, Adrian (2006), *The Fall of Carthage, The Punic Wars 265-146 BC*, Phoenix, p. 304.
- [13] Adrian Goldsworth, *The Fall of Carthage, The Punic Wars 265-146 BC*, Phoenix, 2006, page 305-307



The Battle of Zama by Cornelis Cort, 1567

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- Paul K. Davis: *100 Decisive Battles: From Ancient Times to the Present*. Oxford University Press 2001, ISBN 0-19-514366-3, pp. 47-51 ( *online copy* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=AoWICmNDA3Qnv73QlQs9ocC>) at Google Books)

## External links

- <http://www.roman-empire.net/army/zama.html>
- Battle of Zama (<http://www.unrv.com/empire/battle-of-zama.php>) from UNRV History
- Battle of Zama animated battle map (<http://www.theartofbattle.com/battle-of-zama-202-bc.htm>) by Jonathan Webb

# Battle of Marathon

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The **Battle of Marathon** (Greek: Μάχη τοῦ Μαραθῶνος, *Machē tu Marathōnos*) took place in 490 BC, during the first Persian invasion of Greece. It was fought between the citizens of Athens, aided by Plataea, and a Persian force commanded by Datis and Artaphernes. It was the culmination of the first attempt by Persia, under King Darius I, to subjugate Greece. The first Persian invasion was a response to Greek involvement in the Ionian Revolt, when Athens and Eretria had sent a force to support the cities of Ionia in their attempt to overthrow Persian rule. The Athenians and Eretrians had succeeded in capturing and burning Sardis, but were then forced to retreat with heavy losses. In response to this raid, Darius swore to burn down Athens and Eretria. At the time of the battle, Sparta and Athens were the two largest city states.

Once the Ionian revolt was finally crushed by the Persian victory at the Battle of Lade, Darius began plans to subjugate Greece. In 490 BC, he sent a naval task force under Datis and Artaphernes across the Aegean, to subjugate the Cyclades, and then to make punitive attacks on Athens and Eretria. Reaching Euboea in mid-summer after a successful campaign in the Aegean, the Persians proceeded to besiege and capture Eretria. The Persian force then sailed for Attica, landing in the bay near the town of Marathon. The Athenians, joined by a small force from Plataea, marched to Marathon, and succeeded in blocking the two exits from the plain of Marathon. A stalemate ensued for five days, before the Athenians decided to attack the Persians because, under the cover of night, some of the Persian fleet had set sail for Athens. Despite the numerical advantage of the Persians, the hoplites proved devastatingly effective against the more lightly armed Persian infantry, routing the wings before turning in on the centre of the Persian line.

The defeat at Marathon marked the end of the first Persian invasion of Greece, and the Persian force retreated to Asia. Darius then began raising a huge new army with which he meant to completely subjugate Greece; however, in 486 BC, his Egyptian subjects revolted, indefinitely postponing any Greek expedition. After Darius died, his son Xerxes I re-started the preparations for a second invasion of Greece, which finally began in 480 BC.

The Battle of Marathon was a watershed in the Greco-Persian wars, showing the Greeks that the Persians could be beaten; the eventual Greek triumph in these wars can be seen to begin at Marathon. Since the following two hundred years saw the rise of the Classical Greek civilization, which has been enduringly influential in western society, the Battle of Marathon is often seen as a pivotal moment in European history. For instance, John Stuart Mill famously suggested that "the Battle of Marathon, even as an event in British history, is more important than the Battle of Hastings". The Battle of Marathon is perhaps now more famous as the inspiration for the Marathon race. Although historically inaccurate, the legend of the Greek messenger Pheidippides running to Athens with news of the victory became the inspiration for this athletic event, introduced at the 1896 Athens Olympics, and originally run between Marathon and Athens.

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## Sources

The main source for the Greco-Persian Wars is the Greek historian Herodotus. Herodotus, who has been called the 'Father of History',<sup>[1]</sup> was born in 484 BC in Halicarnassus, Asia Minor (then under Persian overlordship). He wrote his 'Enquiries' (Greek—*Historia*; English—(*The*) *Histories*) around 440–430 BC, trying to trace the origins of the Greco-Persian Wars, which would still have been relatively recent history (the wars finally ending in 450 BC).<sup>[2]</sup> Herodotus's approach was entirely novel, and at least in Western society, he does seem to have invented 'history' as we know it.<sup>[2]</sup> As Holland has it: "For the first time, a chronicler set himself to trace the origins of a conflict not to a past so remote so as to be utterly fabulous, nor to the whims and wishes of some god, nor to a people's claim to manifest destiny, but rather explanations he could verify personally."<sup>[2]</sup>

Many changes that were subsequent with ancient historians, despite following in his footsteps, criticised Herodotus, starting with Thucydides.<sup>[3][4]</sup> Nevertheless, Thucydides chose to begin his history where Herodotus left off (at the Siege of Sestos), and may therefore have felt that Herodotus's history was accurate enough not to need re-writing or correcting.<sup>[4]</sup> Plutarch criticised Herodotus in his essay "On The Malignity of Herodotus", describing Herodotus as "*Philobarbaros*" (barbarian-lover), for not being pro-Greek enough, which suggests that Herodotus might actually have done a reasonable job of being even-handed.<sup>[5]</sup> A negative view of Herodotus was passed on to Renaissance Europe, though he remained well read.<sup>[6]</sup> However, since the 19th century his reputation has been dramatically rehabilitated by archaeological finds which have repeatedly confirmed his version of events.<sup>[7]</sup> The prevailing modern view is that Herodotus generally did a remarkable job in his *Historia*, but that some of his specific details (particularly troop numbers and dates) should be viewed with skepticism.<sup>[7]</sup> Nevertheless, there are still some historians who believe Herodotus made up much of his story.<sup>[8]</sup>

The Sicilian historian Diodorus Siculus, writing in the 1st century BC in his *Bibliotheca Historica*, also provides an account of the Greco-Persian wars, partially derived from the earlier Greek historian Ephorus. This account is fairly consistent with Herodotus's.<sup>[9]</sup> The Greco-Persian wars are also described in less detail by a number of other ancient historians including Plutarch, Ctesias of Cnidus, and are alluded by other authors, such as the playwright Aeschylus. Archaeological evidence, such as the Serpent Column, also supports some of Herodotus's specific claims.<sup>[10]</sup>

## Background

The first Persian invasion of Greece had its immediate roots in the Ionian Revolt, the earliest phase of the Greco-Persian Wars. However, it was also the result of the longer-term interaction between the Greeks and Persians. In 500 BC the Persian Empire was still relatively young and highly expansionistic, but prone to revolts amongst its subject peoples.<sup>[11][12][13]</sup> Moreover, the Persian king Darius was a usurper, and had spent considerable time extinguishing revolts against his rule.<sup>[11]</sup> Even before the Ionian Revolt, Darius had begun to expand the Empire into Europe, subjugating Thrace, and forcing Macedon to become allied to Persia. Attempts at further expansion into the politically fractious world of Ancient



A map showing the Greek world at the time of the battle



Greece may have been inevitable.<sup>[12]</sup> However, the Ionian Revolt had directly threatened the integrity of the Persian empire, and the states of mainland Greece remained a potential menace to its future stability.<sup>[14]</sup> Darius thus resolved to subjugate and pacify Greece and the Aegean, and to punish those involved in the Ionian Revolt.<sup>[14][15]</sup>

The Ionian revolt had begun with an unsuccessful expedition against Naxos, a joint venture between the Persian satrap Artaphernes and the Milesian tyrant Aristagoras.<sup>[16]</sup> In the aftermath, Artaphernes decided to remove Aristagoras from power, but before he could do so, Aristagoras abdicated, and declared Miletus a democracy.<sup>[16]</sup> The other Ionian cities followed suit, ejecting their Persian-appointed tyrants, and declaring themselves democracies.<sup>[16][17]</sup> Aristagoras then appealed to the states of mainland Greece for support, but only Athens and Eretria offered to send troops.<sup>[18]</sup>

The involvement of Athens in the Ionian Revolt arose from a complex set of circumstances, beginning with the establishment of the Athenian Democracy in the late 6th century BC.<sup>[18]</sup> In 510 BC, with the aid of Cleomenes I, King of Sparta, the Athenian people had expelled Hippias, the tyrant ruler of Athens.<sup>[19]</sup> With Hippias's father Peisistratus, the family had ruled for 36 out of the previous 50 years and fully intended to continue Hippias's rule.<sup>[19]</sup> Hippias fled to Sardis to the court of the Persian satrap, Artaphernes and promised control of Athens to the Persians if they were to help restore him.<sup>[20]</sup> In the meantime, Cleomenes helped install a pro-Spartan tyranny under Isagoras in Athens, in opposition to Cleisthenes, the leader of the traditionally powerful Alcmaeonidae family, who considered themselves the natural heirs to the rule of Athens.<sup>[21]</sup> Cleisthenes, however, found himself being politically defeated by a coalition led by Isagoras and decided to change the rules of the game by appealing to the demos (the people), in effect making them a new faction in the political arena. This tactic succeeded, but the Spartan King, Cleomenes I, returned at the request of Isagoras and so the Cleisthenes, the Alcmaeonids and other prominent Athenian families were exiled from Athens. When Isagoras attempted to create a narrow oligarchic government, the Athenian people, in a spontaneous and unprecedented move, expelled Cleomenes and Isagoras.<sup>[22]</sup> Cleisthenes was thus restored to Athens (507 BC), and at breakneck speed began to reform the state with the aim of securing his position. The result was not actually a democracy or a real civic state, but he enabled the development of a fully democratic government, which would emerge in the next generation as the demos realized its power.<sup>[23]</sup> The new found freedom and self-governance of the Athenians meant that they were thereafter exceptionally hostile to the return of the tyranny of Hippias, or any form of outside subjugation; by Sparta, Persia or anyone else.<sup>[22]</sup>



Darius I of Persia, as imagined by a Greek painter, 4th century BC

Cleomenes, unsurprisingly, was not pleased with the events, and marched on Athens with the Spartan army.<sup>[24]</sup> Cleomenes's attempts to restore Isagoras to Athens ended in a debacle, but fearing the worst, the Athenians had by this point already sent an embassy to Artaphernes in Sardis, to request aid from the Persian Empire.<sup>[25]</sup> Artaphernes requested that the Athenians give him an 'earth and water', a traditional token of submission, which the Athenian ambassadors acquiesced to.<sup>[25]</sup> However, they were severely censured for this when they returned to Athens.<sup>[25]</sup> At some point later Cleomenes instigated a plot to restore Hippias to the rule of Athens. This failed and Hippias again fled to Sardis and tried to persuade the Persians to subjugate Athens.<sup>[26]</sup> The Athenians dispatched ambassadors to Artaphernes to dissuade him from taking action, but Artaphernes merely instructed the Athenians to take Hippias back as tyrant.<sup>[18]</sup> Needless to say, the Athenians balked at this, and resolved instead to be openly at war with Persia.<sup>[26]</sup> Having thus become the enemy of Persia, Athens was already in a position to support the Ionian cities when they began their revolt.<sup>[18]</sup> The fact that the Ionian democracies were inspired by the example of Athens no doubt further persuaded the Athenians to support the Ionian Revolt; especially since the cities of Ionia were (supposedly) originally Athenian colonies.<sup>[18]</sup>

The Athenians and Eretrians sent a task force of 25 triremes to Asia Minor to aid the revolt.<sup>[27]</sup> Whilst there, the Greek army surprised and outmaneuvered Artaphernes, marching to Sardis and burning the lower city.<sup>[28]</sup> However, this was as much as the Greeks achieved, and they were then pursued back to the coast by Persian horsemen, losing many men in the process. Despite the fact that their actions were ultimately fruitless, the Eretrians and in particular the Athenians had earned Darius's lasting enmity, and he vowed to punish both cities.<sup>[29]</sup> The Persian naval victory at the Battle of Lade (494 BC) all but ended the Ionian Revolt, and by 493 BC, the last hold-outs were vanquished by the Persian fleet.<sup>[30]</sup> The revolt was used as an opportunity by Darius to extend the empire's border to the islands of the eastern Aegean<sup>[31]</sup> and the Propontis, which had not been part of the Persian dominions before.<sup>[32]</sup> The completion of the pacification of Ionia allowed the Persians to begin planning their next moves; to extinguish the threat to the empire from Greece, and to punish Athens and Eretria.<sup>[33]</sup>

In 492 BC, once the Ionian Revolt had finally been crushed, Darius dispatched an expedition to Greece under the command of his son-in-law, Mardonius. Mardonius re-conquered Thrace and compelled Alexander I of Macedon to make Macedon a client kingdom to Persia, before the wrecking of his fleet brought a premature end to the campaign.<sup>[34]</sup> However in 490 BC, following up the successes of the previous campaign, Darius decided to send a maritime expedition led by Artaphernes, (son of the satrap to whom Hippias had fled) and Datis, a Median admiral. Mardonius had been injured in the prior campaign and had fallen out of favor. The expedition was intended to bring the Cyclades into the Persian empire, to punish Naxos (which had resisted a Persian assault in 499 BC) and then to head to Greece to force Eretria and Athens to submit to Darius or be destroyed.<sup>[35]</sup> After island-hopping across the Aegean, including successfully attacking Naxos, the Persian task force arrived off Euboea in mid summer. The Persians then proceeded to besiege, capture and burn Eretria. They then headed south down the coast of Attica, en route to complete the final objective of the campaign—to punish Athens.

## Prelude

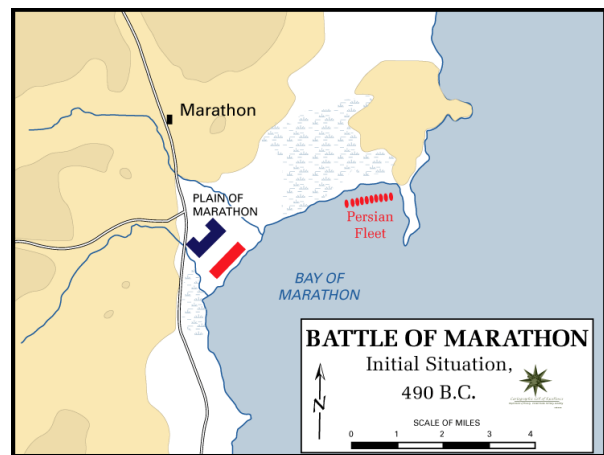
The Persians sailed down the coast of Attica, and landed at the bay of Marathon, roughly 25 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) from Athens, on the advice of the exiled Athenian tyrant Hippias (who had accompanied the expedition).<sup>[36]</sup> Under the guidance of Miltiades, the Athenian general with the greatest experience of fighting the Persians, the Athenian army marched quickly to block the two exits from the plain of Marathon, and prevent the Persians moving inland.<sup>[37][38]</sup> At the same time, Athens's greatest runner, Pheidippides (or Philippides in some accounts) had been sent to Sparta to request that the Spartan army march to the aid of Athens.<sup>[39]</sup> Pheidippides arrived during the festival of *Carneia*, a sacrosanct period of peace, and was informed that the Spartan army could not march to war until the full moon rose; Athens could not expect reinforcement for at least ten days.<sup>[37]</sup> The Athenians would have to hold out at Marathon for the time being, although they were reinforced by the full muster of 1,000 hoplites from the small city of Plataea; a gesture which did much to steady the nerves of the Athenians,<sup>[37]</sup> and won unending Athenian gratitude to Plataea.

For approximately five days the armies therefore confronted each other across the plain of Marathon, in stalemate.<sup>[37]</sup> The flanks of the Athenian camp were

protected either by a grove of trees, or an *abbatis* of stakes (depending on the exact reading).<sup>[40][41]</sup> Since every day brought the arrival of the Spartans closer, the delay worked in favor of the Athenians.<sup>[37]</sup> There were ten Athenian *strategoi* (generals) at Marathon, elected by each of the ten *tribes* that the Athenians were divided into; Miltiades was one of these.<sup>[42]</sup> In addition, in overall charge, was the War-Archon (polemarch), Callimachus, who had been elected by the whole citizen body.<sup>[43]</sup> Herodotus suggests that command rotated between the *strategoi*, each taking in turn a day to command the army.<sup>[44]</sup> He further suggests that each *strategos*, on his day in command, instead deferred to Miltiades.<sup>[44]</sup> In Herodotus's account, Miltiades is keen to attack the Persians (despite knowing that the Spartans are coming to aid the Athenians), but strangely, chooses to wait until his actual day of command to attack.<sup>[44]</sup> This passage is undoubtedly problematic; the Athenians had little to gain by attacking before the Spartans arrived,<sup>[45]</sup> and there is no real evidence of this rotating generalship.<sup>[46]</sup> There does, however, seem to have been a delay between the Athenian arrival at Marathon, and the battle; Herodotus, who evidently believed that Miltiades was eager to attack, may have made a mistake whilst seeking to explain this delay.<sup>[46]</sup>

As is discussed below, the reason for the delay was probably simply that neither the Athenians nor the Persians were willing to risk battle initially.<sup>[45][47]</sup> This then raises the question of why the battle occurred when it did. Herodotus explicitly tells us that the Greeks attacked the Persians (and the other sources confirm this), but it is not clear why they did this before the arrival of the Spartans.<sup>[45]</sup> There are two main theories to explain this.<sup>[45]</sup>

The first theory is that the Persian cavalry left Marathon for an unspecified reason, and that the Greeks moved to take advantage of this by attacking. This theory is based on the absence of any mention of cavalry in Herodotus' account



Initial disposition of forces at Marathon.



A picture reconstructing the beached Persian ships at Marathon before the battle.

of the battle, and an entry in the Suda dictionary.<sup>[45]</sup> The entry *χωρίς ἰππεῖς* ("without cavalry") is explained thus:

The cavalry left. When Datis surrendered and was ready for retreat, the Ionians climbed the trees and gave the Athenians the signal that the cavalry had left. And when Miltiades realized that, he attacked and thus won. From there comes the above-mentioned quote, which is used when someone breaks ranks before battle.<sup>[48]</sup>

There are many variations of this theory, but perhaps the most prevalent is that the cavalry was re-embarked on the ships, and was to be sent by sea to attack (undefended) Athens in the rear, whilst the rest of the Persians pinned down the Athenian army at Marathon.<sup>[37]</sup> This theory therefore utilises Herodotus' suggestion that after Marathon, the Persian army re-embarked and tried to sail around Cape Sounion to attack Athens directly;<sup>[49]</sup> however, according to the first theory this attempt would have occurred *before* the battle (and indeed have triggered the battle).<sup>[47]</sup>

The second theory is simply that the battle occurred because the Persians finally moved to attack the Athenians.<sup>[45]</sup> Although this theory has the Persians moving to the *strategic* offensive, this can be reconciled with the traditional account of the Athenians attacking the Persians by assuming that, seeing the Persians advancing, the Athenians took the *tactical* offensive, and attacked them.<sup>[45]</sup> Obviously, it cannot be firmly established which theory (if either) is correct. However, both theories imply that there was some kind of Persian activity which occurred on or about the fifth day which ultimately triggered the battle.<sup>[45]</sup>

## Date of the battle

Herodotus mentions for several events a date in the lunisolar calendar, of which each Greek city-state used a variant. Astronomical computation allows us to derive an absolute date in the proleptic Julian calendar which is much used by historians as the chronological frame. Philipp August Böckh in 1855 concluded that the battle took place on September 12, 490 BC in the Julian calendar, and this is the conventionally accepted date.<sup>[50]</sup> However, this depends on when exactly the Spartans held their festival and it is possible that the Spartan calendar was one month ahead of that of Athens. In that case the battle took place on August 12, 490 BC.<sup>[50]</sup>

## Opposing forces

### Athenians

Herodotus does not give a figure for the size of the Athenian army. However, Cornelius Nepos, Pausanias and Plutarch all give the figure of 9,000 Athenians and 1,000 Plataeans,<sup>[51][52][53]</sup> while Justin suggests that there were 10,000 Athenians and 1,000 Plataeans.<sup>[54]</sup> These numbers are highly comparable to the number of troops Herodotus says that the Athenians and Plataeans sent to the Battle of Plataea 11 years later.<sup>[55]</sup> Pausanias noticed on the monument to the battle the names of former slaves who were freed in exchange for military services.<sup>[56]</sup> Modern historians generally accept these numbers as reasonable.<sup>[37][57]</sup>



Modern drawing of the Phalanx formation employed by Greek hoplites

## Persians

*For a full discussion of the size of the Persian invasion force, see First Persian invasion of Greece*

According to Herodotus, the fleet sent by Darius consisted of 600 triremes.<sup>[58]</sup> Herodotus does not estimate the size of the Persian army, only saying that they were a "large infantry that was well packed".<sup>[59]</sup> Among ancient sources, the poet Simonides, another near-contemporary, says the campaign force numbered 200,000; while a later writer, the Roman Cornelius Nepos estimates 200,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry, of which only 100,000 fought in the battle, while the rest were loaded into the fleet that was rounding Cape Sounion;<sup>[60]</sup> Plutarch and Pausanias both independently give 300,000, as does the Suda dictionary.<sup>[53][61][62]</sup> Plato and Lysias give 500,000;<sup>[63][64]</sup> and Justinus 600,000.<sup>[65]</sup>

Modern historians have proposed wide ranging numbers for the infantry, from 20,000–100,000 with a consensus of perhaps 25,000;<sup>[66][67][68][69]</sup> estimates for the cavalry are in the range of 1,000.<sup>[70]</sup>

## Strategic and tactical considerations

From a strategic point of view, the Athenians had some disadvantages at Marathon. In order to face the Persians in battle, the Athenians had had to summon all available hoplites;<sup>[37]</sup> and even then they were still probably outnumbered at least 2 to 1.<sup>[41]</sup> Furthermore, raising such a large army had denuded Athens of defenders, and thus any secondary attack in the Athenian rear would cut the army off from the city; and any direct attack on the city could not be defended against.<sup>[47]</sup> Still further, defeat at Marathon would mean the complete defeat of Athens, since no other Athenian army existed. The Athenian strategy was therefore to keep the Persian army pinned down at Marathon, blocking both exits from the plain, and thus preventing themselves from being outmaneuvered.<sup>[37]</sup> However, these disadvantages were balanced by some advantages. The Athenians initially had no need to seek battle, since they had managed to confine the Persians to the plain of Marathon. Furthermore, time worked in their favour, as every day brought the arrival of the Spartans closer.<sup>[37][45]</sup> Having everything to lose by attacking, and much to gain by not attacking, the Athenians remained on the defensive in the run up to the battle.<sup>[45]</sup> Tactically, hoplites were vulnerable to attacks by cavalry, and since the Persians had substantial numbers of cavalry, this made any offensive maneuver by the Athenians even more of a risk, and thus reinforced the defensive strategy of the Athenians.<sup>[47]</sup>



Persian infantry (probably Immortals), shown in a frieze in Darius's palace, Susa

The Persian strategy, on the other hand, was probably principally determined by tactical considerations. The Persian infantry was evidently lightly armoured, and no match for hoplites in a head-on confrontation (as would be demonstrated at the later battles of Thermopylae and Plataea.<sup>[71]</sup>) Since the Athenians seem to have taken up a strong defensive position at Marathon, the Persian hesitation was probably a reluctance to attack the Athenians head-on.<sup>[47]</sup>

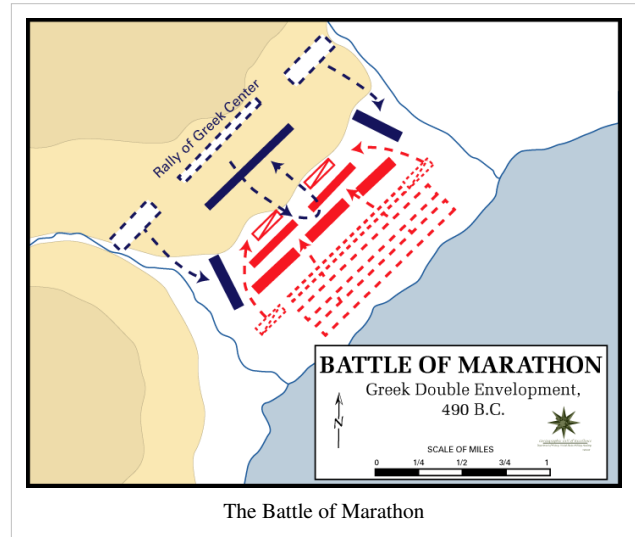
Whatever event eventually triggered the battle, it obviously altered the strategic or tactical balance sufficiently to induce the Athenians to attack the Persians. If the first theory is correct (see above), then the absence of cavalry removed the main Athenian tactical disadvantage, and the threat of being outflanked made it imperative to attack.<sup>[47]</sup> Conversely, if the second theory is correct, then the Athenians were merely reacting to the Persians attacking them.<sup>[45]</sup> Since the Persian force obviously contained a high proportion of missile troops, a static defensive position would have made little sense for the Athenians;<sup>[72]</sup> the strength of the hoplite was in the melee, and the sooner that could be brought about, the better, from the Athenian point of view.<sup>[71]</sup> If the second theory is correct, this raises the



further question of why the Persians, having hesitated for several days, then attacked. There may have been several strategic reasons for this; perhaps they were aware (or suspected) that the Athenians were expecting reinforcements.<sup>[45]</sup> Alternatively, since they may have felt the need to force some kind of victory—they could hardly remain at Marathon indefinitely.<sup>[45]</sup>

## Battle

The distance between the two armies at the point of battle had narrowed to "a distance not less than 8 stadia" or about 1,500 meters.<sup>[73]</sup> Miltiades ordered the two tribes that were forming the center of the Greek formation, the Leontis tribe led by Themistocles and the Antiochis tribe led by Aristides, to be arranged in the depth of four ranks while the rest of the tribes at their flanks were in ranks of eight.<sup>[74][75]</sup> Some modern commentators have suggested this was a deliberate ploy to encourage a double envelopment of the Persian centre. However, this supposes a level of training that the Greeks did not possess.<sup>[76]</sup> There is little evidence for any such tactical thinking in Greek battles until Leuctra in 371 BC.<sup>[77]</sup> It is therefore probable that this arrangement was made, possibly at the last moment, so that the Athenian line was as long as the Persian line, and would not therefore be outflanked.<sup>[47][78]</sup>



When the Athenian line was ready, according to one source, the simple signal to advance was given by Miltiades: "At them".<sup>[47]</sup> Herodotus implies the Athenians ran the whole distance to the Persian lines, shouting their ululating war cry, "Ελελεν! Ελελεν!" ("Eleleu! Eleleu!").<sup>[73]</sup> It is doubtful that the Athenians ran the whole distance; in full armour this would be very difficult.<sup>[79]</sup> More likely, they marched until they reached the limit of the archers' effectiveness, the "beaten zone" (roughly 200 meters), and then broke into a run towards their enemy.<sup>[79]</sup> Another possibility is that they ran *up to* the 200 meter-mark in broken ranks, and then reformed for the march into battle from there. Herodotus suggests that this was the first time a Greek army ran into battle in this way; this was probably because it was the first time that a Greek army had faced an enemy composed primarily of missile troops.<sup>[79]</sup> All this was evidently much to the surprise of the Persians; "... in their minds they charged the Athenians with madness which must be fatal, seeing that they were few and yet were pressing forwards at a run, having neither cavalry nor archers".<sup>[80]</sup> Indeed, based on their previous experience of the Greeks, the Persians might be excused for this; Herodotus tells us that the Athenians at Marathon were "first to endure looking at Median dress and men wearing it, for up until then just hearing the name of the Medes caused the Hellenes to panic".<sup>[73]</sup> Passing through the hail of arrows launched by the Persian army, protected for the most part by their armour, the Greek line finally collided with the enemy army. Holland provides an evocative description:

The enemy directly in their path ... realised to their horror that [the Athenians], far from providing the easy pickings for their bowmen, as they had first imagined, were not going to be halted ... The impact was devastating. The Athenians had honed their style of fighting in combat with other phalanxes, wooden shields smashing against wooden shields, iron spear tips clattering against breastplates of bronze ... in those first terrible seconds of collision, there was nothing but a pulverizing crash of metal into flesh and bone; then the rolling of the Athenian tide over men wearing, at most, quilted jerkins for protection, and armed, perhaps, with nothing more than bows or slings. The hoplites' ash spears, rather than shivering ... could instead stab and stab again, and those of the enemy who avoided their fearful jabbing might easily be crushed to death beneath the sheer weight of the advancing men of bronze.<sup>[81]</sup>

The Athenian wings quickly routed the inferior Persian levies on the flanks, before turning inwards to surround the Persian centre, which had been more successful against the thin Greek centre.<sup>[82]</sup> The battle ended when the Persian centre then broke in panic towards their ships, pursued by the Greeks.<sup>[82]</sup> Some, unaware of the local terrain, ran towards the swamps where unknown numbers drowned.<sup>[83][84]</sup> The Athenians pursued the Persians back to their ships, and managed to capture seven ships, though the majority were able to launch successfully.<sup>[49][85]</sup> Herodotus recounts the story that Cynaegirus, brother of the playwright Aeschylus, who was also among the fighters, charged into the sea, grabbed one Persian trireme, and started pulling it towards shore. A member of the crew saw him, cut off his hand, and Cynegirus died.<sup>[85]</sup>

Herodotus records that 6,400 Persian bodies were counted on the battlefield, and it is unknown how many more perished in the swamps.<sup>[86]</sup> The Athenians lost 192 men and the Plataeans 11.<sup>[86]</sup> Among the dead were the war archon Callimachus and the general Stesilaos.<sup>[85]</sup>

## Aftermath

In the immediate aftermath of the battle, Herodotus says that the Persian fleet sailed around Cape Sounion to attack Athens directly.<sup>[49]</sup> As has been discussed above, some modern historians place this attempt just before the battle. Either way, the Athenians evidently realised that their city was still under threat, and marched as quickly as possible back to Athens.<sup>[87]</sup> The two tribes which had been in the centre of the Athenian line stayed to guard the battlefield under the command of Aristides.<sup>[88]</sup> The Athenians arrived in time to prevent the Persians from securing a landing, and seeing that the opportunity was lost, the Persians turned about and returned to Asia.<sup>[87]</sup> Connected with this episode, Herodotus recounts a rumour that this manoeuvre by the Persians had been planned in conjunction with the Alcmaeonids, the prominent Athenian aristocratic family, and that a "shield-signal" had been given after the battle.<sup>[49]</sup> Although many interpretations of this have been offered, it is impossible to tell whether this was true, and if so, what exactly the signal meant.<sup>[89]</sup> On the next day, the Spartan army arrived at Marathon, having covered the 220 kilometers (**unknown operator: u'strong'** mi) in only three days. The Spartans toured the battlefield at Marathon, and agreed that the Athenians had won a great victory.<sup>[90]</sup>



Hill where the Athenian dead were buried after the Battle of Marathon

The dead of Marathon were awarded by the Athenians the special honor of being the only ones who were buried where they died instead of the main Athenian cemetery at Keramikos.<sup>[91]</sup> On the tomb of the Athenians this epigram composed by Simonides was written:

Ἑλλήνων προμαχοῦντες Ἀθηναῖοι Μαραθῶνι

χρυσοφόρων Μήδων ἐστόρεσαν δύναμιν

Fighting in the forefront of the Hellenes, the Athenians  
at Marathon

destroyed the might of the gold-bearing Medes.

In the meanwhile, Darius began raising a huge new army with which he meant to completely subjugate Greece; however, in

486 BC, his Egyptian subjects revolted, indefinitely postponing any Greek expedition.<sup>[13]</sup> Darius then died whilst preparing to march on Egypt, and the throne of Persia passed to his son Xerxes I.<sup>[92]</sup> Xerxes crushed the Egyptian revolt, and very quickly re-started the preparations for the invasion of Greece.<sup>[93]</sup> The epic second Persian invasion of Greece finally began in 480 BC, and the Persians met with initial success at the battles of Thermopylae and Artemisium.<sup>[94]</sup> However, defeat at the Battle of Salamis would be the turning point in the campaign,<sup>[95]</sup> and the next year the expedition was ended by the decisive Greek victory at the Battle of Plataea.<sup>[96]</sup>

## Significance

The defeat at Marathon barely touched the vast resources of the Persian empire, yet for the Greeks it was an enormously significant victory. It was the first time the Greeks had beaten the Persians, proving that they were not invincible, and that resistance, rather than subjugation, was possible.<sup>[97]</sup>

The battle was a defining moment for the young Athenian democracy, showing what might be achieved through unity and self-belief; indeed, the battle effectively marks the start of a "golden age" for Athens.<sup>[98]</sup> This was also applicable to Greece as a whole; "their victory endowed the Greeks with a faith in their destiny that was to endure for three centuries, during which western culture was born".<sup>[2][99]</sup> John Stuart Mill's famous opinion was that "the Battle of Marathon, even as an event in British history, is more important than the Battle of Hastings".<sup>[100]</sup> It seems that the Athenian playwright Aeschylus considered his participation at Marathon to be his greatest achievement in life (rather than his plays) since on his gravestone there was the following epigram:

Αἰσχύλον Εὐφορίωνος Ἀθηναῖον τόδε κεύθει  
μνῆμα καταφθίμενον πυροφόροιο Γέλας·  
ἀλκὴν δ' εὐδόκιμον Μαραθῶνιον ἄλσος ἂν εἴποι  
καὶ βαθυχαιτήεις Μῆδος ἐπιστάμενος

This tomb the dust of Aeschylus doth hide,

Euphorion's son and fruitful Gela's pride.

How tried his valor, Marathon may tell,

And long-haired Medes, who knew it all too well.<sup>[101]</sup>

Militarily, a major lesson for the Greeks was the potential of the hoplite phalanx. This style had developed during internecine warfare amongst the Greeks; since each city-state fought in the same way, the advantages and disadvantages of the hoplite phalanx had not been obvious.<sup>[81]</sup> Marathon was the first time a phalanx faced more lightly armed troops, and revealed how effective the hoplites could be in battle.<sup>[81]</sup> The phalanx formation was still vulnerable to cavalry (the cause of much caution by the Greek forces at the Battle of Plataea), but used in the right circumstances, it was now shown to be a potentially devastating weapon.<sup>[102]</sup>



Greek Corinthian-style helmet and the skull reportedly found inside it from the Battle of Marathon, now residing in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.



## Legacy

### Legends associated with the battle

The most famous legend associated with Marathon is that of the runner Pheidippides/Philippides bringing news to Athens of the battle, which is described below.



Statue of Pan, Capitoline Museum, Rome

Pheidippides' run to Sparta to bring aid has other legends associated with it. Herodotus mentions that Pheidippides was visited by the god Pan on his way to Sparta (or perhaps on his return journey).<sup>[37]</sup> Pan asked why the Athenians did not honor him and the awed Pheidippides promised that they would do so from then on. The god apparently felt that the promise would be kept, so he appeared in battle and at the crucial moment he instilled the Persians with his own brand of fear, the mindless, frenzied fear that bore his name: "panic". After the battle, a sacred precinct was established for Pan in a grotto on the north slope of the Acropolis, and a sacrifice was annually offered.<sup>[103]</sup>

Similarly, after the victory the festival of the *Agroteras Thysia* ("sacrifice to the Agrotéra") was held at Agrae near Athens, in honor of Artemis Agrotera ("Artemis the Huntress"). This was in fulfillment of a vow made by the city before the battle, to offer in sacrifice a number of goats equal to that of the Persians slain in the conflict. The number was so great, it was decided to offer 500 goats yearly until the number was filled. Xenophon notes that at his time, 90 years after the battle, goats were still offered yearly.<sup>[104][105][106][107]</sup>

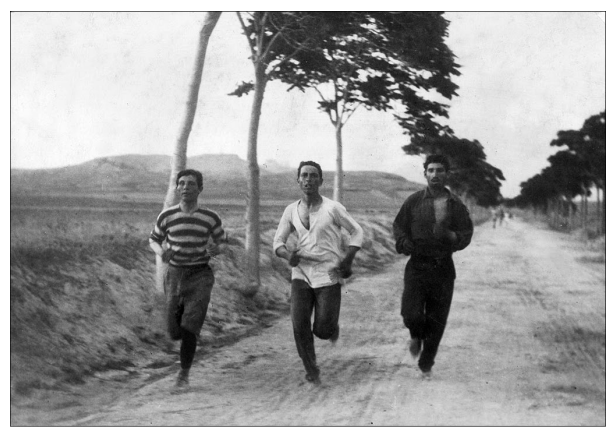
Plutarch mentions that the Athenians saw the phantom of King Theseus, the mythical hero of Athens, leading the army in full battle gear in the charge against the Persians,<sup>[108]</sup> and indeed he was depicted in the mural of the Stoa Poikile fighting for the Athenians, along with the twelve Olympian gods and other heroes.<sup>[109]</sup> Pausanias also tells us that:

They say too that there chanced to be present in the battle a man of rustic appearance and dress. Having slaughtered many of the foreigners with a plough he was seen no more after the engagement. When the Athenians made enquiries at the oracle, the god merely ordered them to honor Echelaeus ("he of the Plough-tail") as a hero."<sup>[83]</sup>

Another tale from the conflict is of the dog of Marathon. Aelian relates that one hoplite brought his dog to the Athenian encampment. The dog followed his master to battle and attacked the Persians at his master's side. He also informs us that this dog is depicted in the mural of the Stoa Poikile.<sup>[110]</sup>

## Marathon run

According to Herodotus, an Athenian runner named Pheidippides was sent to run from Athens to Sparta to ask for assistance before the battle. He ran a distance of over 140 miles, arriving in Sparta the day after he left.<sup>[111]</sup> Then, following the battle, the Athenian army marched the 25 or so miles back to Athens at a very high pace (considering the quantity of armour, and the fatigue after the battle), in order to head off the Persian force sailing around Cape Sounion. They arrived back in the late afternoon, in time to see the Persian ships turn away from Athens, thus completing the Athenian victory.<sup>[112]</sup>



1896 Olympic marathon

Later, in popular imagination, these two events became confused with each other, leading to a legendary but inaccurate version of events. This myth has Pheidippides running from Marathon to Athens after the battle, to announce the Greek victory with the word "Nenikēkamen!" (Attic: Νενικήκαμεν (We were victorious!)), whereupon he promptly died of exhaustion, probably of a heart attack. Most accounts incorrectly attribute this story to Herodotus; actually, the story first appears in Plutarch's *On the Glory of Athens* in the 1st century AD, who quotes from Heracleides of Pontus's lost work, giving the runner's name as either Thersipus of Erchius or Eucles.<sup>[113]</sup> Lucian of Samosata (2nd century AD) gives the same story but names the runner Philippides (not Pheidippides).<sup>[114]</sup> It should be noted that in some medieval codices of Herodotus the name of the runner between Athens and Sparta before the battle is given as Philippides and in a few modern editions this name is preferred.<sup>[115]</sup>

When the idea of a modern Olympics became a reality at the end of the 19th century, the initiators and organizers were looking for a great popularizing event, recalling the ancient glory of Greece.<sup>[116]</sup> The idea of organizing a 'marathon race' came from Michel Bréal, who wanted the event to feature in the first modern Olympic Games in 1896 in Athens. This idea was heavily supported by Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympics, as well as the Greeks.<sup>[116]</sup> This would echo the legendary version of events, with the competitors running from Marathon to Athens. So popular was this event that it quickly caught on, becoming a fixture at the Olympic games, with major cities staging their own annual events.<sup>[116]</sup> The distance eventually became fixed at 26 miles 385 yards, or 42.195 km, though for the first years it was variable, being around 25 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km)—the approximate distance from Marathon to Athens.<sup>[116]</sup>

## References

- [1] Cicero, *On the Laws* I, 5
- [2] Holland, pp. xvi–xvii.
- [3] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, e.g. I, 22 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0200&layout=&loc=1.22>)
- [4] Finley, p. 15.
- [5] Holland, p. xxiv.
- [6] David Pipes. "Herodotus: Father of History, Father of Lies" (<http://web.archive.org/web/20080127105636/http://www.loyno.edu/history/journal/1998-9/Pipes.htm>). Archived from the original (<http://www.loyno.edu/~history/journal/1998-9/Pipes.htm#1>) on January 27, 2008. . Retrieved 2008-01-18.
- [7] Holland, p. 377.
- [8] Fehling, pp. 1–277.
- [9] Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0084&layout=&loc=11.28>)
- [10] Note to Herodotus IX, 81 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126&layout=&loc=9.81.1>)

- [11] Holland, p47–55
- [12] Holland, p58–62
- [13] Holland, p203
- [14] Holland, 171–178
- [15] Herodotus V, 105 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126&layout=&loc=5.105>)
- [16] Holland, p154–157
- [17] Herodotus V, 97 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126&layout=&loc=5.98>)
- [18] Holland, p157–161
- [19] Herodotus V, 65 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126&layout=&loc=5.65>)
- [20] Herodotus V, 96 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126&layout=&loc=5.97>)
- [21] Holland, pp131–132
- [22] Holland, pp133–136
- [23] For a full account and analysis see R.M. Berthold, *Dare To Struggle. The History and Society of Greece* (2009) pp. 81–94
- [24] Holland, p136–138
- [25] Holland, p142
- [26] Herodotus V, 96 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126;query=chapter=#872;layout=;loc=5.95.1>)
- [27] Herodotus V, 99 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126;query=chapter=#875;layout=;loc=5.98.1>)
- [28] Holland, p160
- [29] Holland, p168
- [30] Holland, p176
- [31] Herodotus VI, 31 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126;query=chapter=#933;layout=;loc=6.32.1>)
- [32] Herodotus VI, 33 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126;query=chapter=#935;layout=;loc=6.32.1>)
- [33] Holland, p177–178
- [34] Herodotus VI, 44 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126;query=chapter=#946;layout=;loc=6.43.1>)
- [35] Herodotus VI, 94 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126&layout=&loc=6.94.1>)
- [36] Herodotus VI, 102 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126&layout=&loc=6.102>)
- [37] Holland, pp187–190
- [38] Cornelius Nepos, *Miltiades*, IV
- [39] Herodotus VI, 105 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126;query=chapter=#1011;layout=;loc=6.106.1>)
- [40] Cornelius Nepos, *Miltiades*, VI
- [41] Lazenby, p56
- [42] Herodotus VI, 103 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126;query=chapter=#1009;layout=;loc=6.104.1>)
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- [47] Holland, pp191–195
- [48] Suda, entry *Without cavalry*
- [49] Herodotus VI, 115 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126;layout=;query=chapter=#1021;loc=6.116.1>)
- [50] D.W. Olson *et al.*, pp34–41
- [51] Cornelius Nepos, *Miltiades*, V
- [52] Pausanias X, 20
- [53] Plutarch, *Moralia*, 305 B
- [54] Justin II, 9
- [55] Herodotus IX, 28 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126&layout=&loc=9.28>)
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- [67] Holland, p390
- [68] Lloyd, p164
- [69] Green, p90
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- [83] Pausanias I, 32
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- [85] Herodotus VI, 114 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0126&layout=&loc=6.114.1>)
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- Livius (<http://www.livius.org>), Battle of Marathon (<http://www.livius.org/man-md/marathon/marathon.html>) by Jona Lendering
- Black-and-white photo-essay of Marathon (<http://www.lostrails.com/pages/Hproject/Marathon/Marathon.html>)
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## Battle of Hastings

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The **Battle of Hastings** occurred on 14 October 1066 during the Norman conquest of England, between the Norman-French army of Duke William II of Normandy and the English army under King Harold II.<sup>[1]</sup> It took place at Senlac Hill, approximately 10 km (6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> miles) northwest of Hastings, close to the present-day town of Battle, East Sussex, and was a decisive Norman victory.

Harold II was killed in the battle—legend has it that he was shot through the eye with an arrow. He was the last English king to die in battle on English soil until Richard III was killed at the Battle of Bosworth Field. The battle marked the last successful foreign invasion of the British Isles. Although there was further English resistance, this battle is seen as the point at which William gained control of England, becoming its first Norman ruler as King William I.

The battle also established the superiority of the combined arms attack over an army predominately composed of infantry, demonstrating the effectiveness of archers, cavalry and infantry working cooperatively together. The dominance of cavalry forces over infantry would continue until the emergence of the longbow, and battles such as Crecy, Poitiers and Agincourt in the Hundred Years War.

The famous Bayeux Tapestry depicts the events before and during the battle. Battle Abbey marks the site where it is believed that the battle was fought. Founded by King William "the Conqueror" (as he became known), it serves as a memorial to the dead and may have been an act of penance for the bloodshed. The site is open to the public and is the location of annual re-enactments of the battle.

## Background

Harold Godwinson, from the most powerful family in England, claimed the throne shortly after Edward the Confessor died in January 1066. He secured the support of the Witenagemot, the English assembly of nobles, for his accession. Some sources say that Edward had verbally promised the throne to his cousin, William, the Duke of Normandy, but decided on his deathbed to give it to Harold. While Edward the Confessor's great-nephew Edgar Ætheling was also in England, he was deemed too young.

William took Harold's crowning as a declaration of war. He planned to invade England and take the crown. The Norman army was not powerful enough, so nobles as far as Southern Italy were called to convene at Caen, in Normandy. There, William promised land and titles to his followers and informed them that the voyage was secured

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by the pope. William assembled a fleet said to number 696 ships—if accurate this would imply an army of over 20,000 men. This force waited in port through the summer, supposedly because of adverse weather but quite possibly from fear of a clash at sea with the large English fleet. They finally sailed for England after the exhaustion of supplies forced Harold to dismiss his fleet and army and many English ships were wrecked by a storm. On 28 September 1066 William landed unopposed at Pevensey.

The English King Harold II, who had been waiting for a Norman invasion, had rushed his army northward to attack an invading Norwegian Viking army under King Harald Hardråde and Tostig Godwinson (Harold's brother). He defeated the invaders at the Battle of Stamford Bridge, near York. Upon hearing that the Duke's forces had landed he hurried southward to meet the invaders. His brother, Earl Gyrf, urged a delay while more men could be assembled, but Harold was determined to show his people that he could defend his new kingdom decisively against every invader. He departed London on the morning of 12 October, gathering what forces he could on the way. After camping at Long Bennington, he arrived at Senlac Hill on the night of 13 October.<sup>[2]</sup>

Harold deployed his force, astride the road from Hastings to London, on Senlac Hill, some 6 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) inland north-west of Hastings. Behind him was the great forest of Anderida (the Weald), and in front the ground fell away in a long glaciis-like slope, which rose again at the bottom as the opposing slope of Telham Hill.

## English army

The English army fought two other major battles, at Gate Fulford and Stamford Bridge, less than three weeks before the Battle of Hastings. The latter resulted in the destruction of Harald Hardråde's Viking army, but also affected the English army's battle-worthiness at Hastings.

The English army consisted entirely of infantry. It is possible that some or all the members of the army rode to battle, but once at the appointed place they dismounted to fight on foot. The core of the army was made up of full-time professional soldiers called housecarls who had a long-standing dedication to the King. Their armour consisted of a conical helmet, a chain mail hauberk, and a kite-shaped shield. Their primary weapon was the two-handed Danish battleaxe, although every man would have carried a sword as well.

The bulk of the army, called the fyrd, was composed of part-time English soldiers drawn from the landowning minor nobility. These thegns were the land-holding aristocracy of the time and were required to serve with their own armour and weapons for a certain number of days each year. The Victorian concept of the noble peasant defending his lands with a pitchfork has been quashed by modern archaeological research.

The most formidable defence of the English was the shield wall, in which all the men on the front ranks locked their shields together. In the early stages of the battle, the shield wall was very effective at defending against the Norman archery barrages. The entire army took up position along the ridge-line; as casualties fell in the front lines the rear ranks would move forward to fill the gaps.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Norman army

The Norman army was made up of nobles, mercenaries, and troops from Normandy (around half), Flanders, Brittany (around one third) and France (today Paris and Île-de-France), with some from as far as southern Italy. The Norman army's power derived from its cavalry which were reckoned amongst the best in Europe. They were heavily armoured, and usually had a lance and a sword. As with all cavalry, they were generally at their most effective against troops whose formation had begun to break up. Apart from the missile troops, the Norman infantry were probably protected by ring mail and armed with spear, sword and shield, like their English counterparts.

The large numbers of missile troops in William's army reflected the trend in European armies for combining different types of forces on the battlefield. The bow was a relatively short weapon with a short draw but was effective on the battlefield. Hastings marks the first known use of the crossbow in battle in English history.

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## Battle

William relied on basic tactics with archers in the front rank weakening the enemy with arrows, followed by infantry which would engage in close combat, culminating in a cavalry charge that would break through the English forces. However, his tactics did not work as well as planned. William's army attacked the English as soon as they were ready and formed up. Norman archers shot several volleys but many of the arrows hit the shield wall and had very little effect. Believing the English to have been softened up, William ordered his infantry to attack. As the Normans charged up the hill, the English threw down whatever they could find: stones, javelins, and maces. The barrage inflicted heavy casualties among the Norman ranks, causing the lines to break up.



The battlefield from the north side

The infantry charge reached the English lines, where ferocious hand-to-hand fighting took place. William had expected the English to falter, but the arrow barrage had little effect and nearly all the English troops still stood, their shield wall intact. As a result William ordered his cavalry to charge far sooner than planned. Faced with a wall of axes, spears and swords, many of the horses shied away despite their careful breeding and training. After an hour of fighting, the Breton division on William's left faltered and broke completely, fleeing down the hill. Suffering heavy casualties and realising they would be quickly outflanked, the Norman and Flemish divisions retreated with the Bretons. Unable to resist the temptation, many of the English broke ranks, including hundreds of fyrdmen and Harold's brothers, Leofwyne and Gyrthe. In the following confused fighting, William's horse was killed from underneath him, and he toppled to the ground. Initially, many of William's soldiers thought that he had been killed, and an even greater rout ensued. It was only after he stood up and threw off his helmet that William was able to rally his fleeing troops.

William and a group of his knights successfully counter-attacked the pursuing English, who were no longer protected by the shield wall, and cut down large numbers of fyrdmen. Many did not recognise the Norman counter-attack until it was too late, but some managed to scramble back up the hill to the safety of the housecarls. Harold's brothers were not so fortunate—their deaths deprived the English of an alternative leader after the death of Harold. The two armies formed up, and a temporary lull fell over the battle. The battle had turned to William's advantage, since the English had lost much of the protection provided by the shield wall. Without the cohesion of a disciplined, strong formation, the individual English were easy targets. William launched his army at the strong English position again and many of the English housecarls were killed.

With such a large number of English fyrdmen now holding the front rank, the disciplined shield wall that the housecarls had maintained began to falter, presenting an opportunity to William. At the start of the battle the hail of arrows fired at the English by William's bowmen was ineffective because of the English shields. Though many on the front ranks still had shields, William ordered his archers to fire over the shield wall so that the arrows landed in the clustered rear ranks of the English army. The archers did this with great success. Legend states that it was at this point that Harold was hit in the eye by an arrow. Many of the English were now weary. William's army attacked again, and managed to make small chinks in the shield wall. They were able to exploit these gaps, and the English army began to fragment. William and a handful of knights broke through the wall, and struck down the English king. Without their leader and with many nobles dead, hundreds of fyrdmen fled the field. The housecarls kept their oath of loyalty to the king, and fought bravely until they were all killed.



## Aftermath

Only a remnant of the defenders made their way back to the forest. Some of the Norman forces pursued the English but were ambushed and destroyed in the dusk when they ran afoul of steep ground, called, in later (12th century) sources, "*the Malfosse*", or "*bad ditch*". The most likely site of Malfosse can be identified today as *Oakwood Gill* a deep ditch now traversed by the A2100 road, north of Battle.<sup>[3][4]</sup> William rested his army for two weeks near Hastings, waiting for the English lords to come and submit to him. Then, after he realised his hopes of submission at that point were in vain, he began his advance on London. His army was seriously reduced in November by dysentery, and William himself was gravely ill. However, he was reinforced by fresh troops crossing the English Channel.



Harold's plaque (2006)

Meanwhile in London the remnants of the English government had assembled and hastily chosen the young and inexperienced Edgar the Atheling as king. It has been said they chose him because a weak king was better than no king at all and in the absence of any of the Godwinson family he was now the only viable candidate. It is not known if he was crowned, it would have made sense to have him crowned as soon as possible as his predecessor Harold had been, but there is no record to support this. Not long after the election of Edgar the northern earls, Edwin and Morcar left the city and returned with their forces to their respective earldoms. It has been speculated that they regarded the war with William as a dispute between him and the Godwinson family and hoped to make their own peace. Other members of the English establishment such as Edgar's sisters Margaret and Cristina hastily decamped with their retinues to Chester for safety.<sup>[5]</sup>

William advanced through Kent devastating Romney and receiving the submission of Dover and its important castle. At Dover he paused for a week receiving the submission of Canterbury on October 29. He sent messengers to Winchester who received the submission of that city from the widowed Queen Edith. From Canterbury William advanced to Southwark. After being thwarted in an attempt to cross London Bridge he destroyed the town. He now approached the city by a circuitous route crossing the Thames at Wallingford ravaging the land as he went. The Norman forces advanced on London from the north-west eventually reaching Berkhamstead in late November 1066.<sup>[5]</sup>

Messages were relayed between William's forces and the beleaguered authorities in London. Eventually it was agreed that the city would be spared further carnage if Edgar abdicated and William was recognised as king. This agreement seems to have been imposed on the young Edgar. In early December, Ansgar the Sheriff of Middlesex, the archbishops of York and Canterbury and the deposed Edgar the Atheling came out and submitted to the Norman duke. William received them graciously and accepted their submission. From here he relocated his forces to Romford taking with him appropriate hostages.<sup>[5]</sup>

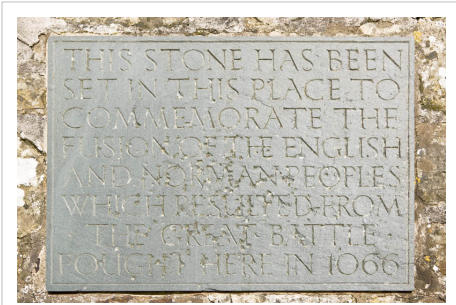
William was crowned king on Christmas Day, 1066 at Westminster Abbey.

## Legacy

Battle Abbey was built on the site of the battle. A plaque marks the place where Harold is believed to have fallen and the location where the high altar of the church once stood. The settlement of Battle, East Sussex, grew up around the abbey and is now a small market town.

The Bayeux Tapestry depicts the events before, during, and after the Battle of Hastings.

The Battle of Hastings is an example of the theory of combined arms. The Norman bowmen, cavalry and infantry cooperated to deny the English the initiative and gave the homogeneous English army few tactical options except defence.



Plaque at Battle Abbey commemorating the fusing of the English and Norman peoples

It is possible that this tactical sophistication existed primarily in the minds of the Norman chroniclers. The account of the battle given in the earliest source, the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*, is one where the Norman advance surprises the English, who manage to gain the top of Senlac Hill before the Normans. The Norman light infantry is sent in while the English are forming their shield wall (to no avail) and then the main force was sent in (no distinction being made between infantry and cavalry).

Succeeding sources include (in chronological order) William of Poitiers's *Gesta Guillelmi* (written between 1071 and 1077), The Bayeux Tapestry (created between 1070 and 1077), and the much later *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, the chronicles written by William of Malmesbury, Florence of Worcester, and Eadmer's *Historia Novorum in Anglia* embellishes the story further, with the final result being a William whose tactical genius was at a high level that he failed to display in any other battle.

The Battle of Hastings had a tremendous influence on the English language. The Normans were French-speaking, and as a result of their rule, they introduced many French words that started in the nobility and eventually became part of the English language itself.

As Paul K. Davis writes, "William's victory placed a foreign ruler on the throne of England, introducing European rather than Scandinavian society onto the isolated island" in "the last successful invasion of England."<sup>[6]</sup>

## Notes

[1] In this article dates before 14 September 1752 are in the Julian calendar, later dates are in the Gregorian calendar.

[2] Howarth *1066* p. 165

[3] *Oakwood Gill* by C. T. Chevallier (1963) therein citing deeds of Battle Abbey and Manorial maps of 1724 and 1811. Also William Dugdale's *Monasticon* 1538. And Four Deeds c. 1240, c. 1245, 1279 and 1302. (<http://www.anglosaxonengland.net/newsletter/docs/that.htm>)

[4] *The 1066 Malfosse Walk* by Neil Clephane-Cameron, Joanne Lawrence and David Sawyer, Battle and District Historical Society (2000) ISBN 1-903099-00-5, p.15

[5] *The History of the Norman Conquest of England*, Edward A. Freemand, Volume III, p.532-7

[6] Davis *100 Decisive Battles* p. 113

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### External links

- Official English Heritage site (<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/1066-battle-of-hastings-abbey-and-battlefield/>)
- Origins of the conflict, the battle itself and its aftermath (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/normans/>) BBC History website
- Staff. "Information on the Battle of Hastings" (<http://www.battle-of-hastings-1066.org.uk>), website of [www.battle-of-hastings-1066.org.uk](http://www.battle-of-hastings-1066.org.uk) (<http://www.battle-of-hastings-1066.org.uk/copyright.htm>). Includes facts and full story.
- William of Malmesbury's Account (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1066Malmesbury.html>)

## Battle of Agincourt

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The **Battle of Agincourt**<sup>[a]</sup> was a major English victory against a numerically superior French army in the Hundred Years' War. The battle occurred on Friday, 25 October 1415 (Saint Crispin's Day), near modern-day Azincourt, in northern France.<sup>[1][b]</sup> Henry V's victory crippled France and started a new period in the war, during which, first, Henry married the French king's daughter and, second, his son, Henry VI, was made heir to the throne of France (although Henry VI later failed to capitalise on his father's battlefield success).

Henry V led his troops into battle and participated in hand-to-hand fighting. The French king of the time, Charles VI, did not command the French army himself as he suffered from severe, repeating illnesses and moderate mental incapacitation. Instead, the French were commanded by Constable Charles d'Albret and various prominent French noblemen of the Armagnac party.

The battle is notable for the use of the English longbow, which Henry used in very large numbers, with English and Welsh archers forming most of his army. The battle is also the centrepiece of the play *Henry V*, by William Shakespeare.

### Contemporary accounts of the battle

The battle of Agincourt is well-documented from at least seven contemporary accounts, three of whom were eye-witnesses. The approximate location of the battle has never been in dispute and remains relatively unchanged after 500 years. Immediately after the battle, Henry summoned the heralds of the two armies who had watched the battle together and settled with the principal French herald, Montjoie, on the name of the battle, Agincourt- after the nearest fortified place.<sup>[2]</sup> Two of the most frequently cited accounts come from French sources, Jean Le Fevre de Saint-Remy, who was present at the battle, and the Enguerrand de Monstrelet. The English eyewitness account comes from the anonymous *Gesta Henrici Quinti*, believed to have been written by a chaplain in the King's

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household, who would have been in the baggage train at the battle.

## Campaign

Henry V invaded France following the failure of negotiations with the French. He claimed the title of King of France through his great-grandfather Edward III, although in practice the English kings were generally prepared to renounce this claim if the French would acknowledge the English claim on Aquitaine and other French lands (the terms of the Treaty of Bretigny).<sup>[3]</sup> He initially called a great council in the spring of 1414 to discuss going to war with France, but the lords insisted that he should negotiate further and moderate his claims. In the following negotiations Henry said that he would give up his claim to the French throne if the French would pay the 1.6 million crowns outstanding from the ransom of John II (who had been captured at the Battle of Poitiers in 1356), and concede English ownership of the lands of Normandy, Touraine, Anjou, Brittany and Flanders, as well as Aquitaine. Henry would marry Princess Catherine, the young daughter of Charles VI, and receive a dowry of 2 million crowns. The French responded with what they considered the generous terms of marriage with Princess Catherine, a dowry of 600,000 crowns, and an enlarged Aquitaine. By 1415 negotiations had ground to a halt, with the English claiming that the French had mocked their claims and ridiculed Henry himself.<sup>[4]</sup> In December 1414, the English parliament was persuaded to grant Henry a "double subsidy", a tax at twice the traditional rate, to recover his inheritance from the French. On 19 April 1415, Henry again asked the great council to sanction war with France, and this time they agreed.<sup>[5]</sup>

Henry's army landed in northern France on 13 August 1415 and besieged the port of Harfleur with an army of about 12,000. The siege took longer than expected. The town surrendered on 22 September, and the English army did not leave until 8 October. The campaign season was coming to an end, and the English army had suffered many casualties through disease. Rather than retire directly to England for the winter, with his costly expedition resulting in the capture of only one town, Henry decided to march most of his army (roughly 9,000) through Normandy to the port of Calais, the English stronghold in northern France, to demonstrate by his presence in the territory at the head of an army that his right to rule in the duchy was more than a mere abstract legal and historical claim.<sup>[6]</sup> He also intended the manoeuvre as a deliberate provocation to battle aimed at the dauphin, who had failed to respond to Henry's personal challenge to combat at Harfleur.<sup>[7]</sup>

The French had raised an army during the siege which assembled around Rouen. This was not strictly a feudal army, but an army paid through a system similar to the English. The French hoped to raise 9,000 troops, but the army was not ready in time to relieve Harfleur. After Henry V marched to the north the French moved to blockade them along the River Somme. They were successful for a time, forcing Henry to move south, away from Calais, to find a ford. The English finally crossed the Somme south of Péronne, at Béthencourt and Voyennes<sup>[8][9]</sup> and resumed marching north. Without the river protection, the French were hesitant to force a battle. They shadowed Henry's army while calling a *semonce des nobles*, calling on local nobles to join the army. By 24 October both armies faced each other for battle, but the French declined, hoping for the arrival of more troops. The two armies spent the night of 24 October on open ground. The next day the French initiated negotiations as a delaying tactic, but Henry ordered his army to advance and to start a battle that, given the state of his army, he would have preferred to avoid, or to fight defensively: that was how Crécy and the other famous longbow victories had been won. The English had very little food, had marched 260 miles in two and a half weeks, were suffering from sickness such as dysentery, and faced much larger numbers of well equipped French men at arms. The French army blocked Henry's way to the safety of Calais however, and delaying battle would only further weaken his tired army and allow more French troops to arrive.<sup>[10]</sup>

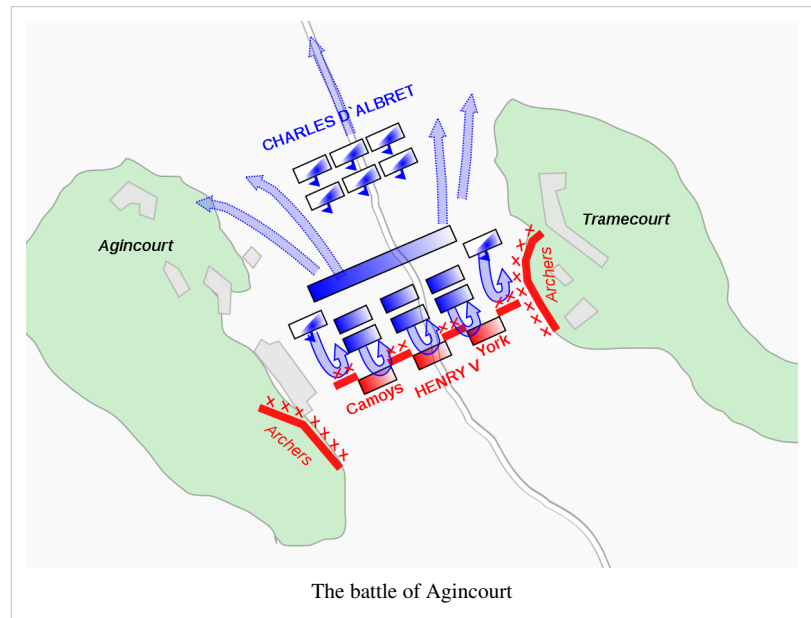
## Battle

### Preparation for battle

The battle was fought in the narrow strip of open land formed between the woods of Tramecourt and Agincourt (close to the modern village of Azincourt). The French army was positioned at the northern exit so as to bar the way to Calais.

### English deployment

Early on the 25th, Henry deployed his army (approximately 1,500 men-at-arms and 7,000 longbowmen) across a 750-yard part of the defile. The army was organised into three "battles" or divisions, the vanguard led by the Duke of York, the main battle led by Henry himself and the rearguard, led by Lord Camoys. In addition, Sir Thomas Erpingham, one of Henry's most experienced household knights, had a role in marshalling the archers.<sup>[11]</sup> It is likely that the English adopted their usual battle line of longbowmen on either flank,



men-at-arms and knights in the centre. They may also have deployed some archers in the centre of the line. The English men-at-arms in plate and mail were placed shoulder to shoulder four deep. The English and Welsh archers on the flanks drove pointed wooden stakes into the ground at an angle to force cavalry to veer off. This use of stakes may have been inspired by the Battle of Nicopolis of 1396, where forces of the Ottoman Empire used the tactic against French cavalry.<sup>[c]</sup>

The English made their confessions before the battle, as was customary.<sup>[12]</sup> Henry, worried about the enemy launching surprise raids, and wanting his troops to remain focused, ordered all his men to spend the night before the battle in silence, with having an ear cut off the punishment for disobeying. He told his men that he would rather die in the coming battle than be captured and ransomed.<sup>[13]</sup> The men-at-arms on both sides were high-ranking men who knew that if captured they could expect to be ransomed. As "commoners", on the other hand, the English archers knew they could expect to be killed out of hand by the French if they were defeated, as they were not worth ransoming.

Henry made a speech, emphasising the justness of his cause, and reminding his army of previous great defeats the kings of England had inflicted on the French. The Burgundian sources have him concluding the speech by telling his men that the French had boasted that they would cut off two fingers from the right hand of every archer, so that he could never draw a longbow again. (Whether this was true is open to question; as previously noted, death was the normal fate of any soldier who could not be ransomed.)<sup>[14]</sup>

## French deployment

By contrast, the French were confident that they would prevail and were eager to fight. The French believed they would triumph over the English not only because their force was larger, fresher, and better equipped, but also because the large number of noble men-at-arms would have considered themselves superior to the large number of archers in the English army, whom the French (based on their experience in living memory of using and facing archers) considered relatively insignificant. The chronicler Edmond de Dintner stated that there were "ten French nobles against one English", ignoring the archers completely.<sup>[15]</sup>

The French were arrayed in three lines or "battles". The first line was led by Constable D'Albret, Marshal Boucicault, and the Dukes of Orléans and Bourbon, with attached cavalry wings under the Count of Vendôme and Sir Clignet de Brebant. The second line was commanded by the Dukes of Bar and Alençon and the Count of Nevers. The third line was under the Counts of Dammartin and Fauconberg.<sup>[16]</sup> The Burgundian chronicler, Jean de Wavrin, writes that there were 8,000 men-at-arms, 4,000 archers and 1,500 crossbowmen in the vanguard, with two wings of 600 and 800 mounted men-at-arms, and the main battle having "as many knights, esquires and archers as in the vanguard", with the rearguard containing "all of the rest of the men-at-arms".<sup>[17]</sup> The Herald of Berry uses somewhat different figures of 4,800 men-at-arms in the first line, 3,000 men in the second line, with two "wings" containing 600 mounted men-at-arms each, and a total of "10,000 men-at-arms",<sup>[18]</sup> but does not mention a third line.

Approximately 8,000 of the heavily armoured French men-at-arms fought on foot, and needed to close the distance to the English army to engage them in hand-to-hand fighting. If they could close the distance, however, they outnumbered the English men-at-arms by more than 5-to-1, and the English longbowmen would not be able to shoot into a *mêlée* without risking hitting their own troops. Many of the French men-at-arms had fathers and grandfathers who had been humiliated in previous battles such as Crécy and Poitiers, and the French nobility were determined to get revenge. Several French accounts emphasise that the French leaders were so eager to defeat the English (and win the ransoms of the English men-at-arms) that they insisted on being in the first line. For example: "All the lords wanted to be in the vanguard, against the opinion of the constable and the experienced knights".<sup>[19]</sup>

There appear to have been thousands of troops in the rearguard, containing servants and commoners whom the French were either unable or unwilling to deploy. Wavrin gives the total French army size as 50,000. He says: "They had plenty of archers and crossbowmen but nobody wanted to let them fire [sic]. The reason for this was that the site was so narrow that there was only enough room for the men-at-arms."<sup>[20]</sup> Most of the rearguard played little part in the battle, with English and French accounts agreeing that many of the French army fled after seeing so many French nobles killed and captured in the fighting.

## Terrain

The field of battle was arguably the most significant factor in deciding the outcome. The recently ploughed land hemmed in by dense woodland favoured the English, both because of its narrowness, and because of the thick mud through which the French knights had to walk.<sup>[21][22]</sup> An analysis by *Battlefield Detectives* has looked at the crowd dynamics of the battlefield.<sup>[23]</sup> The 1,000–1,500 English men-at-arms are described as shoulder to shoulder and four deep, which implies a tight line about 250–300 men long (perhaps split in two by a central group of archers). The remainder of the field would have been filled with the longbowmen behind their palings. The French first line contained men-at-arms who had no way to outflank the English line. The French, divided into the three *battles*, one behind the other at their initial starting position, could not bring all their forces to bear: the initial engagement was between the English army and the first battle line of the French. When the second French battle line started their advance, the soldiers were pushed closer together and their effectiveness was reduced. Casualties in the front line from longbow arrows would also have increased the congestion, as the following men would have to walk around (or over) the fallen. The *Battlefield Detectives* episode states that when the density reached four men per square metre, soldiers would not even be able to take full steps forward, lowering the speed of the advance by 70%.<sup>[23]</sup> Accounts of the battle describe the French engaging the English men-at-arms before being rushed from the sides by the

longbowmen as the *mêlée* developed. The English account in the *Gesta Henrici* says: "For when some of them, killed when battle was first joined, fall at the front, so great was the undisciplined violence and pressure of the mass of men behind them that the living fell on top of the dead, and others falling on top of the living were killed as well".<sup>[24]</sup> Although the French initially pushed the English back, they became so closely packed that they are described as having trouble using their weapons properly. The French monk of St. Denis says: "Their vanguard, composed of about 5,000 men, found itself at first so tightly packed that those who were in the third rank could scarcely use their swords",<sup>[25]</sup> and the Burgundian sources have a similar passage. In practice there was not enough room for all these men to fight, and they were unable to respond effectively when the English longbowmen joined the hand-to-hand fighting. By the time the second French line arrived, for a total of about eight thousand men (depending on the source), the crush would have been even worse. The press of men arriving from behind actually hindered those fighting at the front.

As the battle was fought on a recently ploughed field, and there had recently been heavy rain leaving it very muddy, it proved very tiring to walk through in full plate armour. The French monk of St. Denis describes the French troops as "marching through the middle of the mud where they sank up to their knees. So they were already overcome with fatigue even before they advanced against the enemy". The deep, soft mud particularly favoured the English force because, once knocked to the ground, the heavily armoured French knights had a hard time getting back up to fight in the *mêlée*. Barker states that some knights, encumbered by their armour, actually drowned in their helmets.<sup>[26]</sup> Their limited mobility made them easy targets for the volleys from the English archers. The mud also increased the ability of the much more lightly armoured English archers to join in hand-to-hand fighting against the French men-at-arms.

## Fighting

### Opening moves

On the morning of 25 October the French were still waiting for additional troops to arrive. The Duke of Brabant (about 2,000 men),<sup>[27]</sup> the Duke of Anjou (about 600 men),<sup>[27]</sup> and the Duke of Brittany (6,000 men, according to Montstrelet),<sup>[28]</sup> were all marching to join the army. This left the French with a question of whether or not to advance towards the English.

For three hours after sunrise there was no fighting. Military textbooks of the time stated "Everywhere and on all occasions that foot soldiers march against their enemy face to face, those who march lose and those who remain standing still and holding firm win".<sup>[29]</sup> On top of this, the French were expecting thousands of men to join them if they waited. They were blocking Henry's retreat, and were perfectly happy to wait for as long as it took. There had even been a suggestion that the English would run away rather than give battle when they saw that they would be fighting so many French princes.<sup>[30]</sup>

Henry's men, on the other hand, were already very weary from hunger, illness and marching. Even though he knew as well as the French did that his army would perform better on the defensive, Henry was eventually forced to take a calculated risk, and move his army further forward to start the battle.<sup>[31]</sup> This entailed abandoning his chosen position and pulling out, advancing, and then re-installing the long sharpened wooden stakes pointed outwards toward the enemy which helped protect the longbowmen from cavalry charges.<sup>[32]</sup> (The use of stakes was an



"Morning of the Battle of Agincourt, 25th October 1415", painted by Sir John Gilbert



innovation for the English: during the Battle of Crécy, for example, the archers were instead protected by pits and other obstacles.<sup>[33]</sup> If the French cavalry had charged before the stakes had been hammered back in, the result would probably have been disastrous for the English, as it was at the Battle of Patay. However, the French seem to have been caught off guard by the English advance. The tightness of the terrain also seems to have restricted the planned deployment of their forces.

The French had originally drawn up a battle plan that had archers and crossbowmen in front of their men-at-arms, with a cavalry force at the rear specifically designed to "fall upon the archers, and use their force to break them,"<sup>[34]</sup> but in the event, the French archers and crossbowmen were deployed *behind* and to the sides of the men-at-arms (where they seem to have played almost no part, except possibly for an initial volley of arrows at the start of the battle). The cavalry force, which could have devastated the English line if it had attacked while they moved their stakes, charged only *after* the initial volley of arrows from the English. It is unclear whether the delay occurred because the French were hoping the English would launch a frontal assault (and were surprised when the English instead started shooting from their new defensive position), or whether the French mounted knights instead did not react quickly enough to the English advance. French chroniclers agree that when the mounted charge did come, it did not contain as many men as it should have; Gilles le Bouvier states that some had wandered off to warm themselves and others were walking or feeding their horses.<sup>[35]</sup>

In any case, within extreme bowshot from the French line (approximately 300 yards), the longbowmen dug in their stakes and then opened the engagement with a long range barrage of arrows.

### **The French cavalry attack**

The French cavalry, despite being somewhat disorganised and not at full numbers, charged the longbowmen, but it was a disaster, with the French knights unable to outflank the longbowmen (because of the encroaching woodland) and unable to charge through the forest of sharpened stakes that protected the archers. John Keegan argues that the longbows' main influence on the battle was at this point: armoured only on the head, many horses would have become dangerously out of control when struck in the back or flank from the high-elevation long range shots used as the charge started.<sup>[36]</sup> The mounted charge and subsequent retreat churned up the already muddy terrain between the French and the English. Juliet Barker quotes a contemporary account by a monk of St. Denis who reports how the wounded and panicking horses galloped through the advancing infantry, scattering them and trampling them down in their headlong flight from the battlefield.<sup>[37]</sup> The Burgundian sources also say that the mounted cavalry retreated back into the forward ranks of French men-at-arms advancing on foot.

### **The main French assault**

The Constable of France himself led the attack of the dismounted French men-at-arms. French accounts describe their vanguard alone as containing about 5,000 men-at-arms, which would have outnumbered the English men-at-arms by more than 3 to 1, but before they could engage in hand-to-hand fighting they had to cross the muddy field under a bombardment of a hail of arrows.

The plate armour of the French men-at-arms allowed them to close the 300 yards or so to the English lines while being under what the French monk of Saint Denis described as "a terrifying hail of arrow shot". To protect themselves as much as possible against the arrows they had to lower their visors and bend their helmeted heads to avoid being shot in the face—the eye and air-holes in their helmets were among the weakest points in the armour. This head lowered position restricted both their breathing and their vision. Then they had to walk a few hundred yards through thick mud, a press of comrades and wearing armour weighing 50-60 pounds (20–30 kg). Increasingly they had to walk around or over fallen comrades.<sup>[38]</sup>

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King Henry V at the Battle of Agincourt, 1415, by Sir John Gilbert

The surviving French men-at-arms reached the front of the English line and actually pushed it back, with the longbowmen on the flanks continuing to shoot at point blank range. When the archers ran out of arrows they dropped their bows and using hatchets, swords and the mallets they had used to drive their stakes in, attacked the now disordered, fatigued and wounded French men-at-arms massed in front of them. The French could not cope with the thousands of lightly armoured longbowmen assailants (who were much less hindered by the mud and weight of their armour) combined with

the English men-at-arms. The impact of thousands of arrows, combined with the slog in heavy armour through the mud, the heat and lack of oxygen in plate armour with the visor down, and the crush of their numbers meant the French men-at-arms could "scarcely lift their weapons" when they finally engaged the English line.<sup>[39]</sup> The exhausted French men-at-arms are described as being knocked to the ground by the English and then unable to get back up. As the mêlée developed, the French second line also joined the attack, but they too were swallowed up, with the narrow terrain meaning the extra numbers could not be used effectively. The French men-at-arms were taken prisoner or killed in their thousands. The fighting lasted about three hours, but eventually the leaders of the second line were killed or captured, as those of the first line had been. The English *Gesta Henrici* describes three great heaps of the slain around the three main English standards.<sup>[40]</sup> According to contemporary English accounts, Henry was directly involved in the hand-to-hand fighting. Upon hearing that his youngest brother Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester had been wounded in the groin, Henry took his household guard and stood over his brother, in the front rank of the fighting, until Humphrey could be dragged to safety; the king received an axe blow to the head which knocked off a piece of the crown that formed part of his helmet.<sup>[41]</sup>

### The attack on the English baggage train

The only French success was an attack on the lightly protected English baggage train, with Ysembart d'Azincourt (leading a small number of men-at-arms and varlets plus about 600 peasants) seizing some of Henry's personal treasures, including a crown.<sup>[42]</sup> Whether this was part of a deliberate French plan or an act of local brigandage is unclear from the sources. Certainly, d'Azincourt was a local knight but he may have been chosen to lead the attack because of his local knowledge and the lack of availability of a more senior soldier.<sup>[43]</sup> In some accounts the attack happened towards the end of the battle, and led the English to think they were being attacked from the rear. Barker, following the *Gesta Henrici*, believed to have been written by an English chaplain who was actually in the baggage train, concludes that the attack happened at the *start* of the battle.<sup>[43]</sup>

### Henry orders the killing of the prisoners

Regardless of when the baggage assault happened, there was a point after the initial English victory where Henry became alarmed that the French were regrouping for another attack. The *Gesta Henrici* puts this after the English had overcome the onslaught of the French men-at-arms, and the weary English troops were eyeing the French rearguard ("in incomparable number and still fresh"<sup>[44]</sup>). Le Fevre and Wavrin similarly say that it was signs of the French rearguard regrouping and "marching forward in battle order" which made the English think they were still in danger.<sup>[45]</sup>

In any event, Henry ordered the slaughter of what was perhaps several thousand French prisoners, with only the most high ranked and presumably most able to pay a large ransom being spared. His fear was that the prisoners would rearm themselves with the weapons strewn upon the field, and the exhausted English would be overwhelmed. Though ruthless, it was arguably justifiable given the situation of the battle; perhaps surprisingly, even the French

chroniclers do not criticise him for this.<sup>[46]</sup> This marked the end of the battle, as the French rearguard, having seen so many of the French nobility captured and killed, fled the battlefield.

## Aftermath

Due to a lack of reliable sources it is impossible to give a precise figure for the French and English casualties. However, it is clear that though the English were outnumbered, their losses were far lower than those of the French. The French sources all give 4,000–10,000 French dead, with up to 1,600 English dead. The lowest ratio in these French sources has the French losing six times more men than the English. The English sources vary between about 1,500 and 11,000 for the French dead, with English dead put at no more than 100.<sup>[47]</sup>

Barker identifies from the available records "at least" 112 Englishmen who died in the fighting (including Edward of Norwich, 2nd Duke of York, a grandson of Edward III),<sup>[48]</sup> but this excludes the wounded. One widely used estimate puts the English casualties at 450, not an insignificant number in an army of about 8,500, but far fewer than the thousands the French lost, nearly all of whom were killed or captured. Using the lowest French estimate of their own dead of 4,000 would imply a ratio of nearly 9 to 1 in favour of the English, or over 10 to 1 if the prisoners are included.

The French suffered heavily. Three dukes, at least eight counts, a viscount and an archbishop died, along with numerous other nobles. Of the great royal office holders, France lost her Constable, Admiral, Master of the Crossbowmen and *prévôt* of the marshals.<sup>[49]</sup> The *baillis* of nine major northern towns were killed, often along with their sons, relatives and supporters. In the words of Juliet Barker, the battle "cut a great swath through the natural leaders of French society in Artois, Ponthieu, Normandy, Picardy."<sup>[50]</sup> Estimates of the number of prisoners vary between 700 and 2,200, amongst them the Duke of Orléans (the famous poet Charles d'Orléans) and Jean Le Maingre (known as Boucicault) Marshal of France.<sup>[51]</sup> Almost all these prisoners would have been nobles, as the less valuable prisoners were slaughtered.

Although the victory had been militarily decisive, its impact was complex. It did not lead to further English conquests immediately as Henry's priority was to return to England, which he did on 16 November, to be received in triumph in London on the 23rd.<sup>[52]</sup> Henry returned a conquering hero, in the eyes of his subjects and European powers outside of France, blessed by God. It established the legitimacy of the Lancastrian monarchy and the future campaigns of Henry to pursue his "rights and privileges" in France.<sup>[53]</sup> Other benefits to the English were longer term. Very quickly after the battle, the fragile truce between the Armagnac and Burgundian factions broke down. The brunt of the battle had fallen on the Armagnacs and it was they who suffered the majority of senior casualties and carried the blame for the defeat. The Burgundians seized on the opportunity and within 10 days of the battle had mustered their armies and marched on Paris.<sup>[54]</sup> This lack of unity in France would allow Henry eighteen months to prepare militarily and politically for a renewed campaign. When that campaign took place, it was made easier by the damage done to the political and military structures of Normandy by the battle.<sup>[55]</sup>

It took several years' more campaigning, but Henry was eventually able to fulfil all his objectives. He was recognised by the French in the Treaty of Troyes (1420) as the regent and heir to the French throne. This was cemented by his marriage to Catherine of Valois, the daughter of King Charles VI.

## Notable casualties

### French

Notable casualties included:<sup>[56]</sup>

- Antoine of Burgundy, Duke of Brabant and Limburg (b. 1384)<sup>[57]</sup>
- Philip of Burgundy, Count of Nevers and Rethel (b. 1389)
- Charles I d'Albret, Count of Dreux, the Constable of France<sup>[57]</sup>
- John II, Count of Bethune (b. 1359)
- John I, Duke of Alençon (b. 1385)<sup>[57]</sup>
- Frederick of Lorraine, Count of Vaudemont (b. 1371)
- Robert, Count of Marles and Soissons
- Edward III of Bar (the Duchy of Bar lost its independence as a consequence of his death)<sup>[57]</sup>
- John VI, Count of Roucy
- Jean I de Croÿ and two of his sons
- Waleran III of Luxembourg, Count of Ligny
- Jan I van Brederode

### English and Welsh

Notable casualties included

- Edward of Norwich, 2nd Duke of York (b. 1373)<sup>[58]</sup>
- Michael de la Pole, 3rd Earl of Suffolk<sup>[59]</sup>
- Dafydd Gam (Davy Gam) Welsh hero who reputedly saved Henry V's life at Agincourt<sup>[60]</sup>

## Numbers at Agincourt

Anne Curry in her 2005 book *Agincourt: A New History*, argues (based on research into the surviving administrative records) that the French army was about 12,000 strong, and the English army about 9,000, giving odds of 4–3. By contrast, Juliet Barker in her *Agincourt: The King, the Campaign, the Battle* (also published in 2005) argues the English and Welsh were outnumbered "at least four to one and possibly as much as six to one".<sup>[61]</sup> She suggests figures of about 6,000 for the English and 36,000 for the French, based on the *Gesta Henrici*'s figures of 5,000 archers and 900 men-at-arms for the English, and Jean de Wavrin's statement "that the French were six times more numerous than the English".<sup>[62]</sup> The 2009 *Encyclopædia Britannica* uses the figures of about 6,000 for the English and 20,000 to 30,000 for the French. The 1911 *Britannica* used somewhat different figures of 6,000 archers, 1,000 men-at-arms and "a few thousands of other foot" for the English, with the French outnumbering them by "at least four times".

With one of the lowest estimates for the size of the French army and also one of the highest estimates for the size of the English army, Curry is currently in a minority in suggesting that the odds were as near equal as 4–3. While not necessarily agreeing with the exact numbers Curry uses, some historians have however given support to her assertion that the French army was much smaller than traditionally thought, and the English somewhat bigger. Bertrand Schnerb, a professor of medieval history at the University of Lille, has said that he thinks the French probably had 12,000–15,000 troops.<sup>[63]</sup> Ian Mortimer, in his 2009 book *1415: Henry V's Year of Glory*, notes how Curry "minimises French numbers (by limiting her figures to those in the basic army and a few specific additional companies) and maximises English numbers (by assuming the numbers sent home from Harfleur were no greater than sick lists)", but agrees that previous estimates have exaggerated the odds, and suggests that "the most extreme imbalance which is credible is fifteen thousand French troops against 8,100 English: a ratio of about two-to-one".<sup>[64]</sup>

However, Clifford J. Rogers, professor of history at the United States Military Academy at West Point, has recently argued that archival records are too incomplete to substantially change his view that the English were outnumbered

about 4–1.<sup>[63][65]</sup> Juliet Barker also disagrees with Curry's arguments in the acknowledgements section of her 2005 book on Agincourt, saying: "Surviving administrative records on both sides, but especially the French, are simply too incomplete to support [Curry's] assertion that nine thousand English were pitted against an army only twelve thousand strong. And if the differential really was as low as three to four then this makes a nonsense of the course of the battle as described by eyewitnesses and contemporaries."<sup>[66]</sup>

Those supporting a greater imbalance have generally put more store by contemporary (and especially eyewitness) accounts. The *Gesta Henrici* gives plausible figures for the English of 5,000 archers and 900 men-at-arms, but Mortimer notes it is "wildly inaccurate" in stating the English were outnumbered 30–1, and there have also been doubts as to how much it was written as propaganda for Henry V. The proportions also seem incorrect, as from surviving records we know that Henry set out with about four times as many archers as men-at-arms, not five and a half times as many. Those who have supported the *Gesta* figures for the English army have generally thought that although the English army may have left Harfleur with eight or nine thousand men, it is plausible that after weeks of campaigning and disease in hostile territory they would have lost two or three thousand fighting men; however Mortimer states: "Despite the trials of the march, Henry had lost very few men to illness or death; and we have independent testimony that no more than 160 had been captured on the way."<sup>[67]</sup>

As Mortimer notes, the Burgundian numbers for the size of the French vanguard of 8,000 men-at-arms in the vanguard with 1,400 (or 2,400) men-at-arms in the wings correspond roughly with the figures of ten thousand men-at-arms recorded by the duke of Berry's herald. The Burgundians also recorded 4,000 archers and 1,500 crossbowmen in the "vanguard", which would suggest "fourteen or fifteen thousand fighting men".<sup>[68]</sup> (It should be noted that the Burgundians actually give the total size of the French army as an implausible 50,000,<sup>[69]</sup> and the numbers they use do not correspond closely to the odds they describe. Using very similar numbers, Jean Le Fevre states that the English were outnumbered 3–1, whereas Wavrin states that the English were outnumbered 6–1.<sup>[70]</sup>)

One particular cause of confusion may have been the number of servants on both sides. Mortimer suggests that because there was a much higher proportion of men-at-arms on the French side, the number of non-combatants was much higher. Each man-at-arms could be expected to have a page, who would have ridden one of his spare horses. If the French army had an extra 10,000 mounted men (as opposed to only 1,500 extra for the English), then "the English probably did see an army about three times the size of their own fighting force".<sup>[71]</sup>

It is open to debate whether these should all be counted as non-combatants; Rogers (for example) accepts that the French probably had about 10,000 men-at-arms, but explicitly includes one "gros valet" (an armed, armoured and mounted military servant) per French man-at-arms in his calculation of the odds.<sup>[72]</sup> There may therefore be less difference between some of these different historians' positions on the numerical odds than there initially appears, given that the various accounts generally agree that the battle was almost entirely fought between the French men-at-arms and the English army, with French crossbowmen, archers, and other infantry playing little or no part.

## Popular representations

Soon after the English victory at Agincourt, a number of popular folk songs were created about the battle, the most famous being the *Agincourt Carol*, produced in the first half of the 15th century.<sup>[73]</sup> Other ballads followed, including *King Henry Fifth's Conquest of France*, raising the popular prominence of particular events mentioned only in passing by the original chroniclers, such as the gift of tennis balls before the campaign.<sup>[74]</sup>

The most famous cultural depiction of the battle today, however, is through William Shakespeare's *Henry V*, written in 1599. The play focuses on the pressures of kingship, the tensions between how a king should appear - chivalric, honest and just - and how a king must sometimes act - Machiavellian and ruthless.<sup>[75]</sup> These tensions are illustrated in the play by Shakespeare's depiction of Henry's decision to kill some of the French prisoners, whilst attempting to justify it and distance himself from the event - this moment of the battle is portrayed both as a break with the traditions of chivalry, and as key example of the paradox of kingship.<sup>[76]</sup> Shakespeare's depiction of the battle also plays on the theme of modernity - Shakespeare contrasts the modern, English king and his army with the medieval, chivalric, older model of the French.<sup>[77]</sup> Shakespeare's play presented Henry as leading a truly British force into battle, playing on the importance of the link between the monarch and the common soldiers in the fight.<sup>[78]</sup> The original play does not, however, feature any scenes of the actual battle itself, leading critic Rose Zimbardo to characterise it as "full of warfare, yet empty of conflict."<sup>[79]</sup>



The 15th century Agincourt Carol

The play introduced the famous "Saint Crispin's day" speech; Shakespeare has Henry give a moving narration to his soldiers just before the battle, urging his "band of brothers" to stand together in the forthcoming fight.<sup>[80]</sup> One of Shakespeare's most heroic speeches, critic David Margolies describes how it "oozes honour, military glory, love of country and self-sacrifice", and it forms one of the first instances of English literature linking solidarity and comradeship to success in battle.<sup>[81]</sup> Partially as a result, the battle was used as a metaphor at the beginning of the First World War, when the British Expeditionary Force's attempts to stop the German advances were widely likened to it.<sup>[82]</sup>

Shakespeare's version of the battle of Agincourt has been turned into three films - by Laurence Olivier in 1944, by Kenneth Branagh in 1989, and by Peter Babakitis in 2007.<sup>[79]</sup> Made just prior to the invasion of Normandy, Olivier's gives the battle what Sarah Hatchuel has termed an "exhilarating and heroic" tone, with an artificial, cinematic look to the battle scenes.<sup>[83]</sup> Branagh's version gives a longer, more Realist portrayal of the battle itself, drawing on both historical sources and images from the Vietnam and Falkland Wars.<sup>[84]</sup> Babakitis uses digital effects to exaggerate realist features during his battle scenes, producing a more avant-garde interpretation of the fighting at Agincourt.<sup>[85]</sup>

The battle remains an important symbol in popular culture. For example, a mock trial of Henry V for the crimes associated with the slaughter of the prisoners was held in Washington, D.C. in March 2010, drawing from both the historical record and Shakespeare's play. Participating as judges were Justices Samuel Alito and Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The trial ranged widely over the whether there was just cause for war and not simply the prisoner issue. Although an audience vote was "too close to call", Henry was unanimously found guilty by the court on the basis of "evolving standards of civil society".<sup>[86][87][88]</sup>


In the science fiction novel *Hyperion* by Dan Simmons, Colonel Fedmahn Kassad begins his tale with recalling his experience in a computer simulation of the Battle of Agincourt, used for training officers.



Battlefield today

## Notes

### Footnotes

- **a.** Pronunciation: The story of the battle has been retold many times in English, from the fifteenth-century Agincourt song onwards, and an English pronunciation of  /'ædʒɪn.kɔːrt/ has become established. Merriam-Webster has a small audio file here.<sup>[89]</sup> The modern tendency, however, is to use a style closer to the original French pronunciation: [aʒɛ̃kuʁ], such as /'ædʒɪŋkɔːr/ or /'æʒɪŋkʊər/,<sup>[90][91]</sup> as exemplified in this interview with Juliet Barker on *Meet the Author*, here.<sup>[92]</sup>
- **b.** Dates in the fifteenth century are difficult to reconcile with modern calendars: see Barker (2005) pp. 225–7 for the way the date of the battle was established.
- **c** The first known use of angled stakes to thwart a mounted charge was at the Battle of Nicopolis, an engagement between European states and Turkish forces in 1396, twenty years before Agincourt. French knights, charging uphill, were unseated from their horses, either because their mounts were injured on the stakes or because they dismounted to uproot the obstacles, and overpowered. News of the contrivance circulated within Europe and was described in a book of tactics written in 1411 by Boucicault, Marshal of France.<sup>[33]</sup>

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## Other

- The Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge *Macclesfield Psalter CD*

## External links

- Battle of Agincourt (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p004y25q>) on *In Our Time* at the BBC. ( listen now ([http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/console/p004y25q/In\\_Our\\_Time\\_Battle\\_of\\_Agincourt](http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/console/p004y25q/In_Our_Time_Battle_of_Agincourt)))
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# Battles of Lexington and Concord

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The **Battles of Lexington and Concord** were the first military engagements of the American Revolutionary War.<sup>[1][2]</sup> They were fought on April 19, 1775, in Middlesex County, Province of Massachusetts Bay, within the towns of Lexington, Concord, Lincoln, Menotomy (present-day Arlington), and Cambridge, near Boston. The battles marked the outbreak of open armed conflict between the Kingdom of Great Britain and its thirteen colonies in the mainland of British North America.

About 700 British Army regulars, under Lieutenant Colonel Francis Smith, were given secret orders to capture and destroy military supplies that were reportedly stored by the Massachusetts militia at Concord. Through effective intelligence gathering, Patriot colonials had received word weeks before the expedition that their supplies might be at risk and had moved most of them to other locations. They also received details about British plans on the night before the battle and were able to rapidly notify the area militias of the enemy movement.

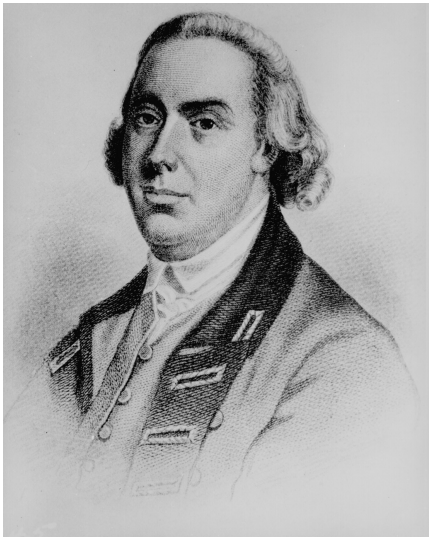
The first shots were fired just as the sun was rising at Lexington. The militia were outnumbered and fell back, and the regulars proceeded on to Concord, where they searched for the supplies. At the North Bridge in Concord, approximately 500 militiamen fought and defeated three companies of the King's troops. The outnumbered regulars fell back from the minutemen after a pitched battle in open territory.

More militiamen arrived soon thereafter and inflicted heavy damage on the regulars as they marched back towards Boston. Upon returning to Lexington, Smith's expedition was rescued by reinforcements under Brigadier General Hugh Percy. The combined force, now of about 1,700 men, marched back to Boston under heavy fire in a tactical withdrawal and eventually reached the safety of Charlestown. The accumulated militias blockaded the narrow land accesses to Charlestown and Boston, starting the Siege of Boston.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his "Concord Hymn", described the first shot fired by the Patriots at the North Bridge as the "shot heard 'round the world."<sup>[3]</sup>

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## Background



Thomas Gage

Further information: Minutemen and Boston campaign

The British Army's infantry, nicknamed "redcoats" and sometimes "devils" by the colonists, had occupied Boston since 1768 and had been augmented by naval forces and marines to enforce the Intolerable Acts, which had been passed by the British Parliament to punish the Province of Massachusetts Bay for the Boston Tea Party and other acts of protest. General Thomas Gage, the military governor of Massachusetts and commander-in-chief of the roughly 3,000 British military forces garrisoned in Boston, had no control over Massachusetts outside of Boston, where implementation of the Acts had increased tensions between the Patriot Whig majority and the Tory minority. Gage's plan was to avoid conflict by removing military supplies from the Whig militias using small, secret and rapid strikes. This struggle for supplies led to one British success and then to several Patriot successes in a series of nearly bloodless conflicts known as the Powder Alarms. Gage considered himself to be a friend of liberty and

attempted to separate his duties as Governor of the colony and as General of an occupying force. Edmund Burke described Gage's conflicted relationship with Massachusetts by saying in Parliament, "An Englishman is the unfittest person on Earth to argue another Englishman into slavery."<sup>[4]</sup>

The colonists had been forming militias of various sorts since the 17th century, at first primarily for defense against local native attacks. These forces were also mustered to action in the French and Indian War in the 1750s and 1760s. They were generally local militias, nominally under the jurisdiction of the provincial government.<sup>[5]</sup> When the political situation began to deteriorate, in particular when Gage effectively dissolved the Provincial government under the terms of the Massachusetts Government Act, these existing connections were employed by the colonists under the Massachusetts Provincial Congress for the purpose of resistance to the perceived military threat.<sup>[6]</sup>

## British preparations

On April 14, 1775, Gage received instructions from Secretary of State William Legge, Earl of Dartmouth, to disarm the rebels, who were known to have hidden weapons in Concord, among other locations, and to imprison the rebellion's leaders, especially Samuel Adams and John Hancock. Dartmouth gave Gage considerable discretion in his commands.<sup>[7][8]</sup>

On the morning of April 18, Gage ordered a mounted patrol of about 20 men under the command of Major Mitchell of the 5th Regiment of Foot into the surrounding country to intercept messengers who might be out on horseback.<sup>[9]</sup> This patrol behaved differently from patrols sent out from Boston in the past, staying out after dark and asking travelers about the location of Adams and Hancock. This had the unintended effect of alarming many residents and increasing their preparedness. The Lexington militia in particular began to muster early that evening, hours before receiving any word from Boston. A well



Francis Smith, commander of the military expedition, in a 1763 portrait

known story alleges that after nightfall one farmer, Josiah Nelson, mistook the British patrol for the colonists and asked them, "Have you heard anything about when the regulars are coming out?", upon which he was slashed on his scalp with a sword. However, the story of this incident was not published until over a century later, which suggests that it may be little more than a family myth.<sup>[10]</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Francis Smith received orders from Gage on the afternoon of April 18 with instructions that he was not to read them until his troops were underway. He was to proceed from Boston "with utmost expedition and secrecy to Concord, where you will seize and destroy... all Military stores... But you will take care that the soldiers do not plunder the inhabitants or hurt private property." Gage used his discretion and did not issue written orders for the arrest of rebel leaders, as he feared doing so might spark an uprising.<sup>[11]</sup>

## American preparations



Margaret Kemble Gage may have given military intelligence to the rebels

The rebellion's ringleaders—with the exception of Paul Revere and Joseph Warren—had all left Boston by April 8. They had received word of Dartmouth's secret instructions to General Gage from sources in London well before they reached Gage himself.<sup>[12]</sup> Adams and Hancock had fled Boston to the home of one of Hancock's relatives in Lexington where they thought they would be safe from the immediate threat of arrest.<sup>[13]</sup>

The Massachusetts militias had indeed been gathering a stock of weapons, powder, and supplies at Concord, as well as an even greater amount much further west in Worcester, but word reached the rebel leaders that British officers had been observed examining the roads to Concord.<sup>[14]</sup> On April 8, Paul Revere rode to Concord to warn the inhabitants that the British appeared to be planning an expedition. The townspeople decided to remove the stores and distribute them among other towns nearby.<sup>[15]</sup>

The colonists were also aware of the upcoming mission on April 19, despite it having been hidden from all the British rank and file and even from all the officers on the mission. There is reasonable speculation, although not proven, that the confidential source of this intelligence was Margaret Gage, General Gage's New Jersey-born wife, who had sympathies with the Colonial cause and a friendly relationship with Warren.<sup>[16]</sup>

Between 9 and 10 pm on the night of April 18, 1775, Joseph Warren told William Dawes and Paul Revere that the King's troops were about to embark in boats from Boston bound for Cambridge and the road to Lexington and Concord. Warren's intelligence suggested that the most likely objectives of the regulars' movements later that night would be the capture of Adams and Hancock. They did not worry about the possibility of regulars marching to Concord, since the supplies at Concord were safe, but they did think their leaders in Lexington were unaware of the potential danger that night. Revere and Dawes were sent out to warn them and to alert colonial militias in nearby towns.<sup>[17]</sup>

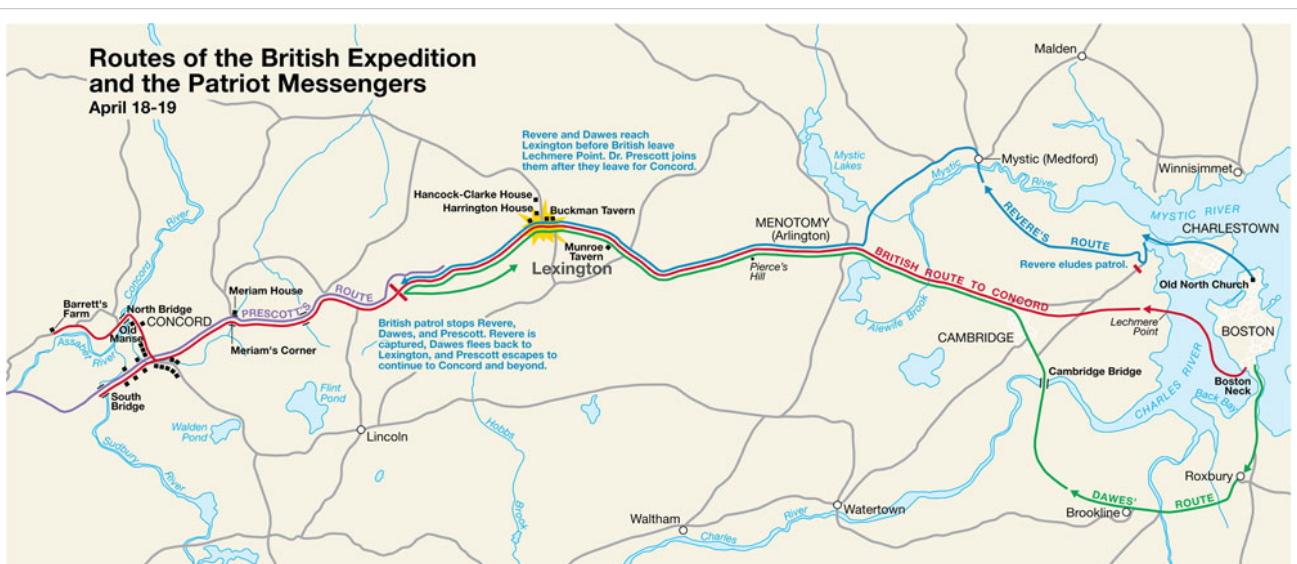
## Militia forces

Further information: Old North Church

Dawes covered the southern land route by horseback across Boston Neck and over the Great Bridge to Lexington.<sup>[18]</sup> Revere first gave instructions to send a signal to Charlestown and then he traveled the northern water route. He crossed the Charles River by rowboat, slipping past the British warship HMS *Somerset* at anchor. Crossings were banned at that hour, but Revere safely landed in Charlestown and rode to Lexington, avoiding a British patrol and later warning almost every house along the route. The Charlestown colonists dispatched additional riders to the north.<sup>[19]</sup>

After they arrived in Lexington, Revere, Dawes, Hancock, and Adams discussed the situation with the militia assembling there. They believed that the forces leaving the city were too large for the sole task of arresting two men and that Concord was the main target. The Lexington men dispatched riders to the surrounding towns, and Revere and Dawes continued along the road to Concord accompanied by Samuel Prescott. In Lincoln, they ran into the British patrol led by Major Mitchell. Revere was captured, Dawes was thrown from his horse, and only Prescott escaped to reach Concord.<sup>[20]</sup> Additional riders were sent out from Concord.

The ride of Revere, Dawes, and Prescott triggered a flexible system of "alarm and muster" that had been carefully developed months before, in reaction to the colonists' impotent response to the Powder Alarm. This system was an improved version of an old network of widespread notification and fast deployment of local militia forces in times of emergency. The colonists had periodically used this system all the way back to the early years of Indian wars in the colony, before it fell into disuse in the French and Indian War. In addition to other express riders delivering messages, bells, drums, alarm guns, bonfires and a trumpet were used for rapid communication from town to town, notifying the rebels in dozens of eastern Massachusetts villages that they should muster their militias because the regulars in numbers greater than 500 were leaving Boston, with possible hostile intentions. This system was so effective that people in towns 25 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) from Boston were aware of the army's movements while they were still unloading boats in Cambridge.<sup>[21]</sup> These early warnings played a crucial role in assembling a sufficient number of colonial militia to inflict heavy damage on the British regulars later in the day. Adams and Hancock were eventually moved to safety, first to what is now Burlington and later to Billerica.<sup>[22]</sup>



A National Park Service map showing the routes of the initial Patriot messengers and of the British expedition

## British advance

Around dusk, General Gage called a meeting of his senior officers at the Province House. He informed them that orders from Lord Dartmouth had arrived, ordering him to take action against the colonials. He also told them that the senior colonel of his regiments, Lieutenant Colonel Smith, would command, with Major John Pitcairn as his executive officer. The meeting adjourned around 8:30 pm, after which Lord Percy mingled with town folk on Boston Common. According to one account, the discussion among people there turned to the unusual movement of the British soldiers in the town. When Percy questioned one man further, the man replied, "Well, the regulars will miss their aim". "What aim?" asked Percy. "Why, the cannon at Concord" was the reply.<sup>[16]</sup> Upon hearing this, Percy quickly returned to Province House and relayed this information to General Gage. Stunned, Gage issued orders to prevent messengers from getting out of Boston, but these were too late to prevent Dawes and Revere from leaving.<sup>[23]</sup>





The British regulars, around 700 infantry, were drawn from 11 of Gage's 13 occupying infantry regiments. For this expedition, Major John Pitcairn commanded ten elite light infantry companies, and Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Bernard commanded 11 grenadier companies, under the overall command of Lieutenant Colonel Smith.<sup>[24]</sup>

Of the troops assigned to the expedition, 350 were from grenadier companies drawn from the 4th (King's Own), 5th, 10th, 18th (Royal Irish), 23rd, 38th, 43rd, 47th, 52nd and 59th Regiments of Foot, and the 1st Battalion of His Majesty's Marine Forces. Protecting the grenadier companies were about 320 light infantry from the 4th, 5th, 10th, 23rd, 38th,

43rd, 47th, 52nd and 59th Regiments, and the 1st Battalion of the Marines. Each company had its own lieutenant, but the majority of the captains commanding them were volunteers attached to them at the last minute, drawn from all of the regiments stationed in Boston. This lack of bond between commander and company would turn out to be problematic.<sup>[25]</sup>

The British began to awaken their troops at 9 pm on the night of April 18 and assembled them on the water's edge on the western end of Boston Common by 10 pm. The British march to and from Concord was a disorganized experience from start to finish. Colonel Smith was late in arriving, and there was no organized boat-loading operation, resulting in confusion at the staging area. The boats used were naval barges that were packed so tightly that there was no room to sit down. When they disembarked at Phipps Farm in Cambridge, it was into waist-deep water at midnight. After a lengthy halt to unload their gear, the regulars began their 17 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) march to Concord at about 2 am.<sup>[24]</sup> During the wait they were provided with extra ammunition, cold salt pork, and hard sea biscuits. They did not carry knapsacks, since they would not be encamped. They carried their haversacks (food bags), canteens, muskets, and accoutrements, and marched off in wet, muddy shoes and soggy uniforms. As they marched through Menotomy, sounds of the colonial alarms throughout the countryside caused the few officers who were aware of their mission to realize they had lost the element of surprise.<sup>[26]</sup> One of the regulars recorded in his journal,

"We got all over the bay and landed on the opposite shore betwixt twelve and one OClock and was on our March by one, which was at first through some swamps and slips of the Sea till we got into the Road leading to Lexington soon after which the Country people begun to fire their alarm guns light their Beacons, to raise the Country. ... To the best of my recollection about 4 oClock in the morning being the 19th of April the 5 front Compys. was ordered to Load which we did."<sup>[27]</sup>

At about 3 am, Colonel Smith sent Major Pitcairn ahead with six companies of light infantry under orders to quick march to Concord. At about 4 am he made the wise but belated decision to send a messenger back to Boston asking for reinforcements.<sup>[28]</sup>

## The Battles

### Lexington

Though often styled a battle, in reality the engagement at Lexington was a minor brush or skirmish.<sup>[29]</sup> As the regulars' advance guard under Pitcairn entered Lexington at sunrise on April 19, 1775, about 80 Lexington militiamen emerged from Buckman Tavern and stood in ranks on the village common watching them, and between 40 and 100 spectators watched from along the side of the road.<sup>[30]</sup> Their leader was Captain John Parker, a veteran of the French and Indian War, who was suffering from tuberculosis and was at times difficult to hear. Of the militiamen who lined up, nine had the surname Harrington, seven Munroe (including the company's orderly sergeant, William Munroe), four Parker, three Tidd, three Locke, and three Reed; fully one quarter of them were related to Captain Parker in some way.<sup>[31]</sup> This group of militiamen was part of Lexington's "training band", a way of organizing local militias dating back to the Puritans, and not what was styled a *minuteman company*.<sup>[32]</sup>

After having waited most of the night with no sign of any British troops (and wondering if Paul Revere's warning was true), at about 4:15 a.m., Parker got his confirmation.<sup>[33]</sup> Thaddeus Bowman, the last scout that Parker had sent out, rode up at a gallop and told him that they were not only coming, but coming in force and they were close.<sup>[34]</sup> Captain Parker was clearly aware that he was outmatched in the confrontation and was not prepared to sacrifice his men for no purpose. He knew that most of the colonists' powder and military supplies at Concord had already been hidden. No war had been declared. (The Declaration of Independence would not even be written for another year). He also knew the British Army had gone on such expeditions before in Massachusetts, found nothing, and marched back to Boston.<sup>[35]</sup>

Parker had every reason to expect that to occur again. The Regulars would march to Concord, find nothing, and return to Boston, tired but empty-handed. He positioned his company carefully. He placed them in parade-ground formation, on Lexington Green. They were in plain sight (not hiding behind walls), but not blocking the road to Concord. They made a show of political and military determination, but no effort to prevent the march of the Regulars.<sup>[36]</sup> Many years later, one of the participants recalled Parker's words as being what is now engraved in stone at the site of the battle: "Stand your ground; don't fire unless fired upon, but if they mean to have a war, let it begin here."<sup>[37]</sup> According to his sworn deposition taken after the battle:

"I ... ordered our Militia to meet on the Common in said Lexington to consult what to do, and concluded not to be discovered, nor meddle or make with said Regular Troops (if they should approach) unless they should insult or molest us; and, upon their sudden Approach, I immediately ordered our Militia to disperse, and not to fire:—Immediately said Troops made their appearance and rushed furiously, fired upon, and killed eight of our Party without receiving any Provocation therefor from us."<sup>[38][39]</sup>

— John Parker

Rather than turn left towards Concord, Marine Lieutenant Jesse Adair, who was at the head of the advance guard, decided on his own to protect the flank of the troops by first turning right and then leading the companies down the common itself in a confused effort to surround and disarm the militia. These men ran towards the Lexington militia loudly crying "Huzzah!" to rouse themselves and to confuse the militia, as they formed a battle line on the common.<sup>[40]</sup> Major Pitcairn arrived from the rear of the advance force and led his three companies to the left and halted them. The remaining companies under Colonel Smith lay further down the road toward Boston.<sup>[41]</sup>

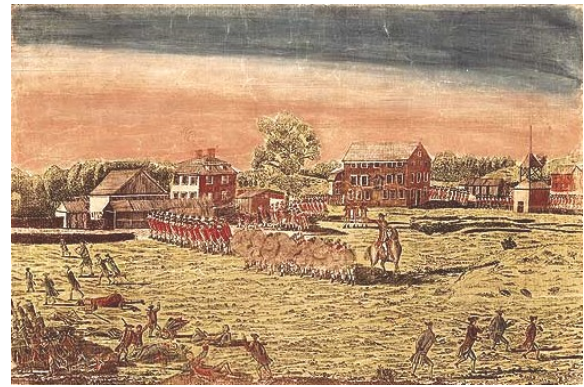
### First shot

A British officer, probably Pitcairn, but accounts are uncertain, as it may also have been Lieutenant William Sutherland, then rode forward, waving his sword, and called out for the assembled throng to disperse, and may also have ordered them to "lay down your arms, you damned rebels!"<sup>[42]</sup> Captain Parker told his men instead to disperse and go home, but, because of the confusion, the yelling all around, and due to the raspiness of Parker's tubercular voice, some did not hear him, some left very slowly, and none laid down their arms. Both Parker and Pitcairn



ordered their men to hold fire, but a shot was fired from an unknown source.<sup>[42]</sup>

"[A]t 5 o'clock we arrived [in Lexington], and saw a number of people, I believe between 200 and 300, formed in a common in the middle of town; we still continued advancing, keeping prepared against an attack through without intending to attack them; but on our coming near them they fired on us two shots, upon which our men without any orders, rushed upon them, fired and put them to flight; several of them were killed, we could not tell how many, because they were behind walls and into the woods. We had a man of the 10th light Infantry wounded, nobody else was hurt. We then formed on the Common, but with some difficulty, the men were so wild they could hear no orders; we waited a considerable time there, and at length proceeded our way to Concord."<sup>[43]</sup>



The first of four engravings by Amos Doolittle from 1775. Doolittle visited the battle sites and interviewed soldiers and witnesses. Contains controversial elements, possibly inaccuracies. Fire from the militia may have occurred but is not depicted.

— Lieutenant John Barker, 4th Regiment of Foot

According to one member of Parker's militia none of the Americans had discharged their muskets as they faced the oncoming British troops. The British did suffer one casualty, a slight wound, the particulars of which were corroborated by a deposition made by Corporal John Munroe. Munroe stated that:

"After the first fire of the regulars, I thought, and so stated to Ebenezer Munroe ...who stood next to me on the left, that they had fired nothing but powder; but on the second firing, Munroe stated they had fired something more than powder, for he had received a wound in his arm; and now, said he, to use his own words, **'I'll give them the guts of my gun.'** We then both took aim at the main body of British troops the smoke preventing our seeing anything but the heads of some of their horses and discharged our pieces."<sup>[44]</sup>

Some witnesses among the regulars reported the first shot was fired by a colonial onlooker from behind a hedge or around the corner of a tavern. Some observers reported a mounted British officer firing first. Both sides generally agreed that the initial shot did not come from the men on the ground immediately facing each other.<sup>[45]</sup> Speculation arose later in Lexington that a man named Solomon Brown fired the first shot from inside the tavern or from behind a wall, but this has been discredited.<sup>[46]</sup> Some witnesses (on each side) claimed that someone on the other side fired first; however, many more witnesses claimed to not know. Yet another theory is that the first shot was one fired by the British, that killed Asahel Porter, their prisoner who was running away (he had been told to walk away and he would be let go, though he panicked and began to run). Historian David Hackett Fischer has proposed that there may actually have been multiple near-simultaneous shots.<sup>[47]</sup> Historian Mark Urban claims the British surged forward with bayonets ready in an undisciplined way, provoking a few scattered shots from the militia. In response the British troops, without orders, fired a devastating volley. This lack of discipline among the British troops had a key role in the escalation of violence.<sup>[48]</sup>

Nobody except the person responsible ever knew with certainty, who fired the first shot of the American Revolutionary War.

Witnesses at the scene described several intermittent shots fired from both sides before the lines of regulars began to fire volleys without receiving orders to do so. A few of the militiamen believed at first that the regulars were only firing powder with no ball, but when they realized the truth, few if any of the militia managed to load and return fire. The rest wisely ran for their lives.<sup>[49]</sup>

"We Nathaniel Mulliken, Philip Russell, [and 32 other men ...] do testify and declare, that on the nineteenth in the morning, being informed that... a body of regulars were marching from Boston towards Concord. ... About five o'clock in the morning, hearing our drum beat, we proceeded towards the parade, and soon found that a large body of troops were marching towards us, some of our company were coming to the parade, and others had reached it, at which time, the company began to disperse, whilst our backs were turned on the troops, we were fired on by them, and a number of our men were instantly killed and wounded, not a gun was fired by any person in our company on the regulars to our knowledge before they fired on us, and continued firing until we had all made our escape."<sup>[38]</sup>

The regulars then charged forward with bayonets. Captain Parker's cousin Jonas was run through. Eight Massachusetts men were killed and ten were wounded; only one British soldier of the 10th Foot wounded. The eight colonists killed were John Brown, Samuel Hadley, Caleb Harrington, Jonathon Harrington, Robert Munroe, Isaac Muzzey, Asahel Porter, and Jonas Parker. Jonathon Harrington, fatally wounded by a British musket ball, managed to crawl back to his home, and died on his own doorstep. One wounded man, Prince Estabrook, was a black slave who was serving in the militia.<sup>[50]</sup>

The companies under Pitcairn's command got beyond their officers' control in part because they were unaware of the actual purpose of the day's mission. They fired in different directions and prepared to enter private homes. Colonel Smith, who was just arriving with the remainder of the regulars, heard the musket fire and rode forward from the grenadier column to see the action. He quickly found a drummer and ordered him to beat assembly. The grenadiers arrived shortly thereafter, and once order was restored the light infantry were permitted to fire a victory volley, after which the column was reformed and marched on toward Concord.<sup>[51]</sup>

## Concord



The second of four engravings by Amos Doolittle from 1775, depicting the British entering Concord

The militiamen of Concord and Lincoln, in response to the raised alarm, had mustered in Concord. They received reports of firing at Lexington, and were not sure whether to wait until they could be reinforced by troops from towns nearby, or to stay and defend the town, or to move east and greet the British Army from superior terrain. A column of militia marched down the road toward Lexington to meet the British, traveling about 1.5 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) until they met the approaching column of regulars. As the regulars numbered about 700 and the militia at this time only numbered about 250, the militia column turned around and marched back into Concord, preceding the regulars

by a distance of about 500 yards (**unknown operator: u'strong'** m).<sup>[52]</sup> The militia retreated to a ridge overlooking the town and the command discussed what to do next. Caution prevailed, and Colonel James Barrett surrendered the town of Concord and led the men across the North Bridge to a hill about a mile north of town, where they could continue to watch the troop movements of the British and the activities in the center of town. This step proved fortuitous, as the ranks of the militia continued to grow as minuteman companies arriving from the western towns joined them there.<sup>[53]</sup>

### The search for militia supplies

When the troops arrived in the village of Concord, Smith divided them to carry out Gage's orders. The 10th Regiment's company of grenadiers secured South Bridge under Captain Mundy Pole, while seven companies of light infantry under Captain Parsons, numbering about 100, secured the North Bridge near Barrett's force. Captain Parsons took four companies from the 5th, 23rd, 38th and 52nd Regiments up the road 2 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) beyond the North Bridge to search Barrett's Farm, where intelligence indicated supplies would be found.<sup>[54]</sup> Two companies from the 4th and 10th were stationed to guard their return route, and one company from the 43rd remained guarding the bridge itself. These companies, which were under the relatively inexperienced command of Captain Walter Laurie, were aware that they were significantly outnumbered by the 400-plus militia men that were only a few hundred yards away. The concerned Captain Laurie sent a messenger to Smith requesting reinforcements.<sup>[55]</sup>

Using detailed information provided by Loyalist spies, the grenadier companies searched the small town for military supplies. When they arrived at Ephraim Jones's tavern, by the jail on the South Bridge road, they found the door barred shut, and Jones refused them entry. According to reports provided by local Tories, Pitcairn knew cannon had been buried on the property. Jones was ordered at gunpoint to show where the guns were buried. These turned out to be three massive pieces, firing 24-pound shot, that were much too heavy to use defensively, but very effective against fortifications, with sufficient range to bombard the city of Boston from other parts of nearby mainland.<sup>[56]</sup> The grenadiers smashed the trunnions of these three guns so they could not be mounted. They also burned some gun carriages found in the village meetinghouse, and when the fire spread to the meetinghouse itself, local resident Martha Moulton persuaded the soldiers to help in a bucket brigade to save the building.<sup>[57]</sup> Nearly a hundred barrels of flour and salted food were thrown into the millpond, as were 550 pounds of musket balls. Of the damage done, only that done to the cannon was significant. All of the shot and much of the food was recovered after the British left. During the search, the regulars were generally scrupulous in their treatment of the locals, including paying for food and drink consumed. This excessive politeness was used to advantage by the locals, who were able to misdirect searches from several smaller caches of militia supplies.<sup>[58]</sup>

Barrett's Farm had been an arsenal weeks before but few weapons remained now, and these were, according to family legend, quickly buried in furrows to look like a crop had been planted. The troops sent there did not find any supplies of consequence.<sup>[59]</sup>

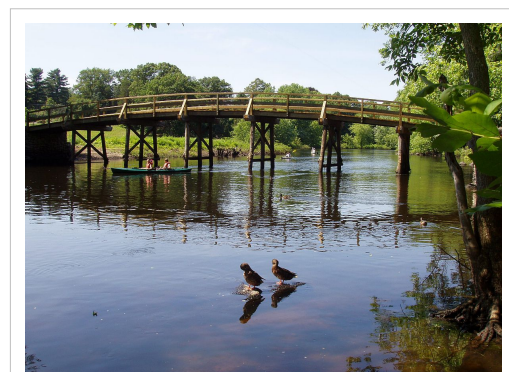
### The North Bridge

Colonel Barrett's troops, upon seeing smoke rising from the village square, and seeing only a few companies directly below them, decided to march back toward the town from their vantage point on Punkatasset Hill to a lower, closer flat hilltop about 300 yards (**unknown operator: u'strong'** m) from the North Bridge. As the militia advanced, the two British companies from the 4th and 10th that held the position near the road retreated to the bridge and yielded the hill to Barrett's men.<sup>[60]</sup>

Five full companies of Minutemen and five more of militia from Acton, Concord, Bedford and Lincoln occupied this hill as more groups of men streamed in, totaling at least 400 against Captain Laurie's light infantry companies, a force totaling 90–95 men.

Barrett ordered the Massachusetts men to form one long line two deep on the highway leading down to the bridge, and then he called for another consultation. While overlooking North Bridge from the top of the hill, Barrett, Lt. Col.

John Robinson of Westford and the other Captains discussed possible courses of action. Captain Isaac Davis of Acton, whose troops had arrived late, declared his willingness to defend a town not their own by saying, "I'm not



The reconstructed North Bridge in Minute Man National Historical Park, Concord



afraid to go, and I haven't a man that's afraid to go."<sup>[61]</sup>

Barrett told the men to load their weapons but not to fire unless fired upon, and then ordered them to advance. Laurie ordered the British companies guarding the bridge to retreat across it. One officer then tried to pull up the loose planks of the bridge to impede the colonial advance, but Major Buttrick began to yell at the regulars to stop harming the bridge. The Minutemen and militia advanced in column formation on the light infantry, keeping to the road, since it was surrounded by the spring floodwaters of the Concord River.<sup>[62]</sup>

Captain Laurie then made a poor tactical decision. Since his summons for help had not produced any results, he ordered his men to form positions for "street firing" behind the bridge in a column running perpendicular to the river. This formation was appropriate for sending a large volume of fire into a narrow alley between the buildings of a city, but not for an open path behind a bridge. Confusion reigned as regulars retreating over the bridge tried to form up in the street-firing position of the other troops. Lieutenant Sutherland, who was in the rear of the formation, saw Laurie's mistake and ordered flankers to be sent out. But as he was from a company different from the men under his command, only three soldiers obeyed him. The remainder tried as best they could in the confusion to follow the orders of the superior officer.<sup>[63]</sup>

A shot rang out, and this time there is certainty from depositions taken from men on both sides afterwards that it came from the Army's ranks. It was likely a warning shot fired by a panicked, exhausted British soldier from the 43rd, according to Laurie's letter to his commander after the fight. Two other regulars then fired immediately after that, shots splashing in the river, and then the narrow group up front, possibly thinking the order to fire had been given, fired a ragged volley before Laurie could stop them.<sup>[64]</sup>

Two of the Acton Minutemen, Private Abner Hosmer and Captain Isaac Davis, who were at the head of the line marching to the bridge, were hit and killed instantly. Four

more men were wounded, but the militia only halted when Major Buttrick yelled "Fire, for God's sake, fellow soldiers, fire!"<sup>[64][65]</sup> At this point the lines were separated by the Concord River and the bridge, and were only 50 yards (**unknown operator: u'strong' m**) apart. The few front rows of colonists, bound by the road, and blocked from forming a line of fire, managed to fire over each others' heads and shoulders at the regulars massed across the bridge. Four of the eight British officers and sergeants, who were leading from the front of their troops, were wounded by the volley of musket fire. At least three privates (Thomas Smith, Patrick Gray and James Hall, all from the 4th) were killed or mortally wounded, and nine were wounded.<sup>[66]</sup>

The regulars found themselves trapped in a situation where they were both outnumbered and outmaneuvered. Lacking effective leadership and terrified at the superior numbers of the enemy, with their spirit broken, and likely not having experienced combat before, they abandoned their wounded, and fled to the safety of the approaching grenadier companies coming from the town center, isolating Captain Parsons and the companies searching for arms at Barrett's Farm.<sup>[65]</sup>



The third of four engravings by Amos Doolittle from 1775, depicting the engagement at the North Bridge

## After the fight



Statue memorializing the battle at the North Bridge, inscribed with verse from Emerson's "Concord Hymn"

The colonists were stunned by their success. No one had actually believed either side would shoot to kill the other. Some advanced; many more retreated; and some went home to see to the safety of their homes and families. Colonel Barrett eventually began to recover control. He moved some of the militia back to the hilltop 300 yards (**unknown operator: u'strong' m**) away and sent Major Buttrick with others across the bridge to a defensive position on a hill behind a stone wall.<sup>[66]</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Smith heard the exchange of fire from his position in the town moments after he received the request for reinforcements from Laurie. He quickly assembled two companies of grenadiers to lead toward the North Bridge himself. As these troops marched, they met the shattered remnants of the three light infantry companies running towards them. Smith was concerned about the four companies that had been at Barrett's, since their route to town was now unprotected. When he saw the Minutemen in the distance behind their wall, he halted his two companies and moved forward with only his officers to take a closer look. One of the Minutemen behind that wall observed, "If we had fired, I

believe we could have killed almost every officer there was in the front, but we had no orders to fire and there wasn't a gun fired."<sup>[67]</sup> During a tense standoff lasting about 10 minutes, a mentally ill local man named Elias Brown wandered through both sides selling hard cider.<sup>[67]</sup>

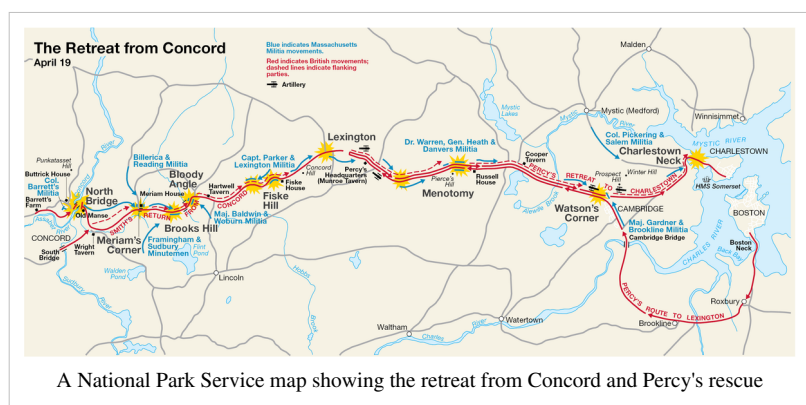
At this point, the detachment of regulars sent to Barrett's farm marched back from their fruitless search of that area. They passed through the now mostly-deserted battlefield, and saw dead and wounded comrades lying on the bridge. There was one who looked to them as if he had been scalped, which angered and shocked the British soldiers. They crossed the bridge and returned to the town by 11:30 am, under the watchful eyes of the colonists, who continued to maintain defensive positions. The regulars continued to search for and destroy colonial military supplies in the town, ate lunch, reassembled for marching, and left Concord after noon. This delay in departure gave colonial militiamen from outlying towns additional time to reach the road back to Boston.<sup>[68]</sup>

## Return march

*An interactive mural describing this stage of the battle may be found at the National Park Service site <sup>[69]</sup> for the Minute Man National Historical Park.*

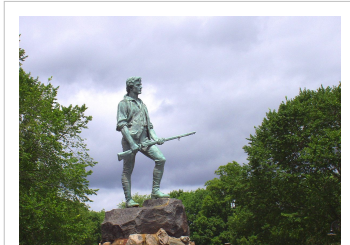
## Concord to Lexington

Lieutenant Colonel Smith, concerned about the safety of his men, sent flankers to follow a ridge and protect his forces from the roughly 1,000 colonials now in the field as they marched east out of Concord. This ridge ended near Meriam's Corner, a crossroads and a small bridge about a mile (2 km) outside the village of Concord. To cross the narrow bridge, the army column had to stop, dress its line, and close its rank to a mere three soldiers abreast. Colonial militia companies arriving from the north and east had converged at this point, and presented a clear numerical advantage over the regulars. As the last of the army column marched over the bridge, colonial militiamen from the Reading militia fired, the regulars



turned and fired a volley, and the colonists returned fire. Two regulars were killed and perhaps six wounded, with no colonial casualties. Smith sent out his flanking troops again after crossing the small bridge.<sup>[70]</sup>

Nearly 500 militiamen from Chelmsford had assembled in the woods on Brooks Hill about 1 mile (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) past Meriam's Corner. Smith's leading forces charged up the hill to drive them off, but the colonists did not withdraw, inflicting significant casualties on the attackers. The bulk of Smith's force proceeded along the road until it reached Brooks Tavern, where they engaged a single militia company from Framingham, killing and wounding several of them. Smith withdrew his men from Brooks Hill and moved across another small bridge into Lincoln.<sup>[70]</sup>



Statue depicting John Parker, captain of the Lexington militia

The regulars soon reached a point in the road where there was a rise and a curve through a wooded area. At this point, now known as the "Bloody Angle", 200 men, mostly from the towns of Bedford and Lincoln, had positioned themselves behind trees and walls in a rocky, tree-filled pasture for an ambush. Additional militia joined in from the other side of the road, catching the British in a crossfire in the wooded swamp, while the Concord militia closed from behind to attack. Thirty soldiers and four colonial militia were killed.<sup>[71]</sup> The soldiers escaped by breaking into a trot, a pace that the colonials could not maintain through the woods and swampy terrain. Colonial forces on the road itself behind the British were too densely packed and disorganized to mount an attack.<sup>[71]</sup>

Militia forces by this time had risen to about 2,000, and Smith sent out flankers again. When three companies of militia ambushed the head of his main force near either Ephraim Hartwell's or (more likely) Joseph Mason's Farm, the flankers closed in and trapped the militia from behind. Flankers also trapped the Bedford militia after a successful ambush near the Lincoln–Lexington border, but British casualties were mounting from these engagements and from persistent long-range fire, and the exhausted British were running out of ammunition.<sup>[71]</sup>

On the Lexington side of the border, Captain Parker, according to only one uncorroborated source (Ebenezer Munroe's memoir of 1824), waited on a hill with the reassembled Lexington Training Band, some of them bandaged up from the encounter in Lexington earlier in the day. These men, according to this account written only many years later, did not begin the ambush until Colonel Smith himself came into view. Smith was wounded in the thigh sometime on the way back to Lexington, and the entire British column was halted in this ambush now known as "Parker's Revenge". Major Pitcairn sent light infantry companies up the hill to clear out any militia sniping at them.<sup>[72]</sup>

The light infantry cleared two additional hills—"The Bluff" and "Fiske Hill"—and took casualties from ambushes. Pitcairn fell from his horse, which was injured by colonists firing from Fiske Hill. Now both principal leaders of the expedition were injured or unhorsed, and their men were tired and thirsty. A few surrendered; most now broke formation and ran forward in a mob. Their organized, planned withdrawal had turned into a rout. "Concord Hill" remained before Lexington Center, and a few uninjured officers turned and supposedly threatened their own men with their swords if they would not reform in good order.<sup>[72]</sup>

Only one British officer remained uninjured in the leading three companies. He was considering surrendering his men when he heard cheering further ahead. A full brigade, about 1,000 men with artillery under the command of Earl Percy, had arrived to rescue them. It was about 2:30 pm.<sup>[73]</sup>

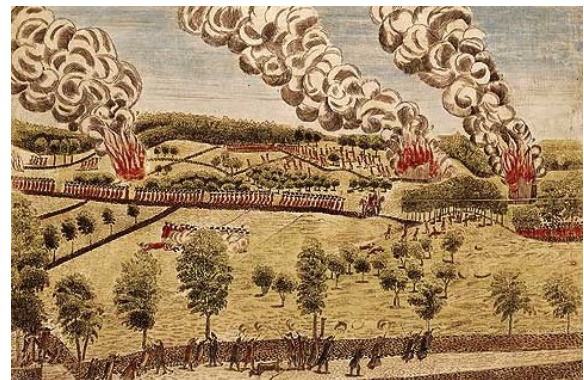
During this part of the march, the colonists fought where possible in large ordered formations (using short-range, smoothbore muskets) at least eight times. This is contrary to the widely-held myth of scattered individuals firing with longer-range rifles from behind walls and fences. Although scattered fire had also occurred on this march, these long-range tactics proved useful later in the war. Nobody at Lexington or Concord—indeed, anywhere along the Battle Road or later at Bunker Hill—had a rifle, according to the historical records.<sup>[74]</sup>



### Percy's rescue

General Gage had left orders for reinforcements to assemble in Boston at 4 am, but in his obsession for secrecy, he had sent only one copy of the orders to the adjutant of the 1st Brigade, whose servant left the envelope on a table. At about 5 am, Smith's request for reinforcements was finally received, and orders were sent for 1st Brigade consisting of the line companies of infantry (the 4th, 23rd, and 47th) and a battalion of British Marines to assemble. Unfortunately, once again only one copy of the orders were sent to each commander, and the order for the Marines was delivered to the desk of Major Pitcairn, who was on the Lexington Common at the time. After these delays, Percy's brigade, about 1,000 strong, left Boston at about 8:45 am. His troops marched out toward Lexington. Along the way they marched to the tune of "Yankee Doodle" to taunt the inhabitants of the area.<sup>[1][75]</sup> By the Battle of Bunker Hill less than two months later, the song had become a popular anthem for the colonial forces.<sup>[76]</sup>

Percy took the land route across Boston Neck and over the Great Bridge, which some enterprising colonists had stripped of its planking to delay their way.<sup>[77]</sup> His men then came upon an absent-minded tutor at Harvard College and asked him which road would take them to Lexington. The Harvard man, apparently oblivious to the reality of what was happening around him, showed him the proper road without thinking. (He was later compelled to leave the country for inadvertently supporting the enemy.)<sup>[78]</sup> Percy's troops arrived in Lexington at about 2:00 pm. They could hear gunfire in the distance as they set up their cannon and lines of regulars on high ground with commanding views of the town. Colonel Smith's men approached like a fleeing mob with the full complement of colonial militia in close formation pursuing them. Percy ordered his artillery to open fire at extreme range, dispersing the colonial militiamen. Smith's men collapsed with exhaustion once they reached the safety of Percy's lines.<sup>[79]</sup>



The fourth of four engravings by Amos Doolittle from 1775, showing Percy's rescue in Lexington.

Against the advice of his Master of Ordnance, Percy had left Boston without spare ammunition for his men or for the two artillery pieces they brought with them, thinking the extra wagons would slow him down. Each man in Percy's brigade had only 36 rounds, and each artillery piece was supplied with only a few rounds carried in side-boxes.<sup>[80][81]</sup> After Percy had left the city, Gage directed two ammunition wagons guarded by one officer and thirteen men to follow. This convoy was intercepted by a small party of older, former militiamen, still on the "alarm list" who could not join their militia companies because they were well over 60. These men rose up in ambush and demanded the surrender of the wagons, but the regulars ignored them and drove their horses on. The old men opened fire, shot the lead horses, killed two sergeants, and wounded the officer.<sup>[80]</sup> The survivors ran, and six of them threw their weapons into a pond before they surrendered.<sup>[81]</sup>

### Lexington to Menotomy



Percy's return to Charlestown (detail from 1775 map of the battle).

Percy assumed control of the combined forces of about 1,700 men and let them rest, eat, drink, and have their wounds tended at field headquarters (Munroe Tavern) before resuming the march. They set out from Lexington at about 3:30 pm, in a formation that emphasized defense along the sides and rear of the column.<sup>[82]</sup> Wounded regulars rode on the cannon and were forced to hop off when they were fired at by gatherings of militia. Percy's men were often surrounded, but they



had the tactical advantage of interior lines. Percy could shift his units more easily to where they were needed, while the colonial militia were required to move around the outside of his formation. Percy placed Smith's men in the middle of the column, while the 23rd Regiment's line companies made up the column's rear guard. Because of information provided by Smith and Pitcairn about how the Americans were attacking, Percy ordered the rear guard to be rotated every mile or so, to allow some of his troops to rest briefly. Flanking companies were sent to both sides of the road, and a powerful force of Marines acted as the vanguard to clear the road ahead.<sup>[82]</sup>

During the respite at Lexington, Brigadier General William Heath arrived and took command of the militia. Earlier in the day, he had traveled first to Watertown to discuss tactics with Joseph Warren, who had left Boston that morning, and other members of the Massachusetts Committee of Safety. Heath and Warren reacted to Percy's artillery and flankers by ordering the militias to avoid close formations that would attract cannon fire. Instead, they surrounded Percy's marching square with a moving ring of skirmishers at a distance to inflict maximum casualties at minimum risk to individual militiamen.<sup>[83]</sup>

A few mounted militiamen on the road would dismount, fire muskets at the approaching regulars, then remount and gallop ahead to repeat the tactic. Unmounted militia would often fire from long range, in the hope of hitting somebody in the main column of soldiers on the road and surviving, since both British and colonials used muskets with an effective combat range of about 50 yards (**unknown operator: u'strong' m**). Infantry units would apply pressure to the sides of the British column. When it moved out of range, those units would move around and forward to re-engage the column further down the road. Heath sent messengers out to intercept arriving militia units, directing them to appropriate places along the road to engage the regulars. Some towns sent supply wagons to assist in feeding and rearming the militia. Heath and Warren did lead skirmishers in small actions into battle themselves, but it was the presence of effective leadership that probably had the greatest impact on the success of these tactics.<sup>[83]</sup> Percy wrote of the colonial tactics, "The rebels attacked us in a very scattered, irregular manner, but with perseverance and resolution, nor did they ever dare to form into any regular body. Indeed, they knew too well what was proper, to do so. Whoever looks upon them as an irregular mob, will find himself very much mistaken."<sup>[84]</sup>



The Jason Russell House in Arlington.

The fighting grew more intense as Percy's forces crossed from Lexington into Menotomy. Fresh militia poured gunfire into the British ranks from a distance, and individual homeowners began to fight from their own property. Some homes were also used as sniper positions, turning the situation into a soldier's nightmare: house-to-house fighting. Jason Russell pleaded for his friends to fight alongside him to defend his house by saying, "An Englishman's home is his castle."<sup>[85]</sup> He stayed and was killed in his doorway. His friends, depending on which account is to be believed, either hid in the cellar, or died in the house from bullets and bayonets after shooting at the soldiers who followed them in. The Jason Russell House still stands and contains

bullet holes from this fight. A militia unit that attempted an ambush from Russell's orchard was caught by flankers, and eleven men were killed, some allegedly after they had surrendered.<sup>[85]</sup>

Percy lost control of his men, and British soldiers began to commit atrocities to repay for the supposed scalping at the North Bridge and for their own casualties at the hands of a distant, often unseen enemy. Based on the word of Pitcairn and other wounded officers from Smith's command, Percy had learned that the Minutemen were using stone walls, trees and buildings in these more thickly settled towns closer to Boston to hide behind and shoot at the column. He ordered the flank companies to clear the colonial militiamen out of such places.<sup>[86]</sup>

Many of the junior officers in the flank parties had difficulty stopping their exhausted, enraged men from killing everyone they found inside these buildings. For example, two innocent drunks who refused to hide in the basement of a tavern in Menotomy were killed only because they were suspected of being involved with the day's events.<sup>[87]</sup> Although many of the accounts of ransacking and burnings were exaggerated later by the colonists for propaganda

value (and to get financial compensation from the colonial government), it is certainly true that taverns along the road were ransacked and the liquor stolen by the troops, who in some cases became drunk themselves. One church's communion silver was stolen but was later recovered after it was sold in Boston.<sup>[86]</sup> Aged Menotomy resident Samuel Whittemore killed three regulars before he was attacked by a British contingent and left for dead. (He recovered from his wounds and later died in 1793 at age 98.)<sup>[88]</sup> All told, far more blood was shed in Menotomy and Cambridge than elsewhere that day. The colonists lost 25 men killed and nine wounded there, and the British lost 40 killed and 80 wounded, with the 47th Foot and the Marines suffering the highest casualties. Each was about half the day's fatalities.<sup>[89]</sup>

### Menotomy to Charlestown

The British troops crossed the Menotomy River (today known as Alewife Brook) into Cambridge, and the fight grew more intense. Fresh militia arrived in close array instead of in a scattered formation, and Percy used his two artillery pieces and flankers at a crossroads called Watson's Corner to inflict heavy damage on them.<sup>[86]</sup>

Earlier in the day, Heath had ordered the Great Bridge to be dismantled. Percy's brigade was about to approach the broken-down bridge and a riverbank filled with militia when Percy directed his troops down a narrow track (now Beech Street, near present-day Porter Square) and onto the road to Charlestown. The militia (now numbering about 4,000) were unprepared for this movement, and the circle of fire was broken. An American force moved to occupy Prospect Hill (in modern-day Somerville), which dominated the road, but Percy moved his cannon to the front and dispersed them with his last rounds of ammunition.<sup>[86]</sup>

A large militia force arrived from Salem and Marblehead. They might have cut off Percy's route to Charlestown, but these men halted on nearby Winter Hill and allowed the British to escape. Some accused the commander of this force, Colonel Timothy Pickering, of permitting the troops to pass because he still hoped to avoid war by preventing a total defeat of the regulars. Pickering later claimed that he had stopped on Heath's orders, but Heath denied this.<sup>[86]</sup> It was nearly dark when Pitcairn's Marines defended a final attack on Percy's rear as they entered Charlestown. The regulars took up strong positions on the hills of Charlestown. Some of them had been without sleep for two days and had marched 40 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) in 21 hours, eight hours of which had been spent under fire. But now they held high ground protected by heavy guns from the HMS *Somerset*. Gage quickly sent over line companies of two fresh regiments—the 10th and 64th—to occupy the high ground in Charlestown and build fortifications. Although they were begun, the fortifications were never completed and would later be a starting point for the militia works built two months later in June before the Battle of Bunker Hill. General Heath studied the position of the British Army and decided to withdraw the militia to Cambridge.<sup>[90]</sup>

### Aftermath

In the morning, Boston was surrounded by a huge militia army, numbering over 15,000, which had marched from throughout New England.<sup>[91]</sup> Unlike the Powder Alarm, the rumors of spilled blood were true, and the Revolutionary War had begun. The militia army continued to grow as surrounding colonies sent men and supplies. The Second Continental Congress adopted these men into the beginnings of the Continental Army. Even now, after open warfare had started, Gage still refused to impose martial law in Boston. He persuaded the town's selectmen to surrender all private weapons in return for promising that any inhabitant could leave town.<sup>[92]</sup>

The battle was not a major one in terms of tactics or casualties. However, in terms of supporting the British political strategy behind the Intolerable Acts and the military strategy behind the Powder Alarms, the battle was a significant failure because the expedition contributed to the fighting it was intended to prevent, and because few weapons were actually seized.<sup>[84]</sup>

The battle was followed by a war for British political opinion. Within four days of the battle, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress had collected scores of sworn testimonies from militiamen and from British prisoners. When word leaked out a week after the battle that Gage was sending his official description of events to London, the

Provincial Congress sent over 100 of these detailed depositions on a faster ship. They were presented to a sympathetic official and printed by the London newspapers two weeks before Gage's report arrived.<sup>[91]</sup> Gage's official report was too vague on particulars to influence anyone's opinion. George Germain, no friend of the colonists, wrote, "the Bostonians are in the right to make the King's troops the aggressors and claim a victory."<sup>[93]</sup> Politicians in London tended to blame Gage for the conflict instead of their own policies and instructions. The British troops in Boston variously blamed General Gage and Colonel Smith for the failures at Lexington and Concord.<sup>[94]</sup>

The day after the battle, John Adams left his home in Braintree to ride along the battlefields. He became convinced that "the Die was cast, the Rubicon crossed."<sup>[95]</sup> Thomas Paine in Philadelphia had previously thought of the argument between the colonies and the Home Country as "a kind of law-suit", but after news of the battle reached him, he "rejected the hardened, sullen-tempered Pharaoh of England forever."<sup>[96]</sup> George Washington received the news at Mount Vernon and wrote to a friend, "the once-happy and peaceful plains of America are either to be drenched in blood or inhabited by slaves. Sad alternative! But can a virtuous man hesitate in his choice?"<sup>[96]</sup> A group of hunters on the frontier named their campsite Lexington when they heard news of the battle in June. It eventually became the city of Lexington, Kentucky.<sup>[97]</sup>

## Legacy

It was important to the early American government that an image of British fault and American innocence be maintained for this first battle of the war. The history of Patriot preparations, intelligence, warning signals, and uncertainty about the first shot was rarely discussed in the public sphere for decades. The story of the wounded British soldier at the North Bridge, *hors de combat*, struck down on the head by a Minuteman using a hatchet, the purported "scalping", was strongly suppressed. Depositions mentioning some of these activities were not published and were returned to the participants (this notably happened to Paul Revere<sup>[98]</sup>). Paintings portrayed the Lexington fight as an unjustified slaughter.<sup>[98]</sup>

The issue of which side was to blame grew during the early nineteenth century. For example, older participants' testimony in later life about Lexington and Concord differed greatly from their depositions taken under oath in 1775. All now said the British fired first at Lexington, whereas fifty or so years before, they weren't sure. All now said they fired back, but in 1775, they said few were able to. The "Battle" took on an almost mythical quality in the American consciousness. Legend became more important than truth. A complete shift occurred, and the Patriots were portrayed as actively fighting for their cause, rather than as suffering innocents. Paintings of the Lexington skirmish began to portray the militia standing and fighting back in defiance.<sup>[99]</sup>

By the rude bridge that arched the flood  
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled  
Here once the embattled farmers stood  
And fired the shot heard round the world.

a verse from Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Concord Hymn"

Ralph Waldo Emerson immortalized the events at the North Bridge in his 1837 "Concord Hymn". "Concord Hymn" became important because it commemorated the beginning of the American Revolution, and that for much of the 19th century it was a means by which Americans learned about the Revolution, helping to forge the identity of the nation.<sup>[100]</sup>

After 1860, several generations of schoolchildren memorized Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "Paul Revere's Ride". Historically it is inaccurate (for example, Paul Revere never made it to Concord), but it captures the idea that an individual can change the course of history.<sup>[101]</sup>

In the 20th century, popular and historical opinion varied about the events of the historic day, often reflecting the political mood of the time. Isolationist anti-war sentiments before the World Wars bred skepticism about the nature

of Paul Revere's contribution (if any) to the efforts to rouse the militia. Anglophilia in the United States after the turn of the twentieth century led to more balanced approaches to the history of the battle. During World War I, a film about Paul Revere's ride was seized under the Espionage Act of 1917 for promoting discord between the United States and Britain.<sup>[102]</sup>

During the Cold War, Revere was used not only as a patriotic symbol, but also as a capitalist one. In 1961, novelist Howard Fast published *April Morning*, an account of the battle from a fictional 15-year-old's perspective, and reading of the book has been frequently assigned in American secondary schools. A film version was produced for television in 1987, starring Chad Lowe and Tommy Lee Jones. In the 1990s, parallels were drawn between American tactics in the Vietnam War and those of the British Army at Lexington and Concord.<sup>[103]</sup>

The site of the battle in Lexington is now known as the Lexington Battle Green, has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and is a National Historic Landmark. Several memorials commemorating the battle have been established there.

The lands surrounding the North Bridge in Concord, as well as approximately 5 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) of the road along with surrounding lands and period buildings between Merriam's Corner and western Lexington are part of Minuteman National Historical Park. There are walking trails with interpretive displays along routes that the colonists might have used that skirted the road, and the Park Service often has personnel (usually dressed in period dress) offering descriptions of the area and explanations of the events of the day.<sup>[104]</sup> A bronze bas relief of Major Buttrick, designed by Daniel Chester French and executed by Edmond Thomas Quinn in 1915, is in the park, along with French's *Minute Man* statue.<sup>[105]</sup>

Four current units of the Massachusetts National Guard units (181st Infantry,<sup>[106]</sup> 182nd Infantry,<sup>[107]</sup> 101st Engineer Battalion,<sup>[108]</sup> and 125th Quartermaster Company<sup>[109]</sup>) are derived from American units that participated in the Battles of Lexington and Concord. There are only thirty current units of the U.S. Army with colonial roots.

## Commemorations

Patriots' Day is celebrated annually in honor of the battle in Massachusetts, Maine, and by the Wisconsin public schools, on the third Monday in April.<sup>[110][111][112]</sup> Re-enactments of Paul Revere's ride are staged, as are the battle on the Lexington Green, and ceremonies and firings are held at the North Bridge.

### Centennial commemoration

On April 19, 1875, President Ulysses S. Grant and members of his cabinet joined 50,000 people to mark the 100th anniversary of the battles. The sculpture by Daniel Chester French, *The Minute Man*, located at the North Bridge, was unveiled on that day. A formal ball took place in the evening at the Agricultural Hall in Concord.<sup>[113]</sup>

### Sesquicentennial commemoration

In April 1925 the United States Post Office issued three stamps commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Battles at Lexington and Concord. The Lexington—Concord



Daniel Chester French's *Minute Man*

commemoratives were the first of many commemoratives issued to honor the 150th anniversaries of events that surrounded America's War of Independence. The three stamps were first placed on sale in Washington, D.C. and in five Massachusetts cities and towns that played major roles in the Lexington and Concord story: Lexington, Concord, Boston, Cambridge, and Concord Junction (as West Concord was then known).<sup>[114]</sup> This is not to say that other locations were not involved in the battles.



George Washington  
Washington at  
Cambridge  
issue of 1925.



Shot heard round the World  
Birth of Liberty  
issue of 1925



The Minute Man  
by Daniel Chester French  
issue of 1925

## Bicentennial commemoration

The Town of Concord invited 700 prominent U.S. citizens and leaders from the worlds of government, the military, the diplomatic corps, the arts, sciences, and humanities to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the battles. On April 19, 1975, as a crowd estimated at 110,000 gathered to view a parade and celebrate the Bicentennial in Concord, President Gerald Ford delivered a major speech near the North Bridge, which was televised to the nation.<sup>[115]</sup>

Freedom was nourished in American soil because the principles of the Declaration of Independence flourished in our land. These principles, when enunciated 200 years ago, were a dream, not a reality. Today, they are real. Equality has matured in America. Our inalienable rights have become even more sacred. There is no government in our land without consent of the governed. Many other lands have freely accepted the principles of liberty and freedom in the Declaration of Independence and fashioned their own independent republics. It is these principles, freely taken and freely shared, that have revolutionized the world. The volley fired here at Concord two centuries ago, 'the shot heard round the world', still echoes today on this anniversary.<sup>[116]</sup>

— President Gerald R. Ford

## Notes

- [1] French, pp. 2, 272-273
- [2] A controversial interpretation holds that the Battle of Point Pleasant, six months earlier, was the initial military engagement of the Revolutionary War. Despite a 1908 United States Senate resolution designating it as such, few, if any, historians subscribe to this interpretation. ([http://www.wvculture.org/history/journal\\_wvh/wvh56-5.html](http://www.wvculture.org/history/journal_wvh/wvh56-5.html))
- [3] Emerson's Concord Hymn
- [4] Fischer, p. 30
- [5] Brooks, pp. 30-31
- [6] Fischer, p. 51
- [7] Fischer, pp. 75-76
- [8] Brooks, pp. 37-38
- [9] Fischer, p. 89
- [10] Hafner discusses this incident in detail.
- [11] Fischer, p. 85
- [12] Tourtellot, pp. 71-72 (colonists have intelligence in late March) & p. 87 (Gage receives instructions April 16)
- [13] Tourtellot, p. 70
- [14] Fischer, pp. 80-85



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- [15] Fischer, p. 87
- [16] Fischer, p. 96
- [17] Brooks, pp.41–42
- [18] Fischer, p. 97
- [19] Brooks, pp. 42–44
- [20] Brooks, p. 50
- [21] Fischer, pp. 138–145
- [22] Frothingham, p. 60
- [23] Frothingham, p. 58
- [24] Tourtellot, pp. 105–107
- [25] Fischer, pp. 70, 121
- [26] Tourtellot, pp. 109–115
- [27] Jeremy Lister's Journal
- [28] Fischer, pp. 127–128
- [29] *The Oxford Illustrated History of the British Army* (1994) p. 122
- [30] Fischer, p. 400
- [31] Fischer, p. 158
- [32] Fischer, p. 153
- [33] Fischer, David Hackett, *Paul Revere's Ride*, p. 151, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 1994.
- [34] Tourtellot, Arthur Bernon, *William Diamond's Drum: The Beginning of the War of the American Revolution*, pp. 116-126, Doubleday & Co., Inc., Garden City, New York, 1959.
- [35] Fischer, David Hackett, *Paul Revere's Ride*, pp. 43, 75-86, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 1994.
- [36] Galvin, Gen. John R., US Army, *The Minutemen - The First Fight: Myths and Realities of the American Revolution*, 2nd edition, pp. 120-124, Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, Inc., Washington, D.C., 1989.
- [37] Coburn, p. 63
- [38] Isaiah Thomas deposition
- [39] Tourtellot, p. 123
- [40] Brooks pp. 52–53
- [41] Fischer, pp. 189–190
- [42] Fischer, pp.190–191
- [43] John Barker's Diary, p. 32
- [44] <http://www.motherbedford.com/Chronology06.htm>
- [45] Fischer, p. 193
- [46] Fischer, p. 402
- [47] Fischer discusses the shot on pp. 193–194, with detailed footnotes on pp. 399–403, in which he discusses some of the testimony in detail.
- [48] Urban, pp. 19–20
- [49] Fischer, pp. 194–195
- [50] Brooks, pp. 55–56
- [51] Fischer, pp. 198–200
- [52] Tourtellot, p. 152
- [53] Tourtellot, p. 154
- [54] Frothingham, p. 67
- [55] Fischer, p. 215
- [56] Fischer p.207
- [57] Martha Moulton deposition
- [58] Tourtellot, pp. 155–158
- [59] French, p. 197
- [60] Fischer, p. 208
- [61] Fischer, p. 209
- [62] Fischer, pp. 209–212
- [63] Fischer, p. 212
- [64] Brooks, p. 67
- [65] Tourtellot, pp. 165–166
- [66] Fischer, p. 214
- [67] Fischer, p. 216
- [68] Tourtellot, pp. 166–168
- [69] <http://www.nps.gov/mima/brvc/mural.htm>
- [70] Brooks, p. 71
- [71] Fischer, pp. 226–227
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- [72] Brooks, pp. 72–73
- [73] Fischer, p. 232
- [74] Fischer, p. 161
- [75] Brooks, p. 79
- [76] Frothingham, p. 178
- [77] Tourtellot, pp. 184–185
- [78] Tourtellot, p. 185
- [79] Fischer, pp. 241–242
- [80] Brooks, pp. 81–82
- [81] Fischer, pp. 243–244
- [82] Fischer, pp. 245–246
- [83] Fischer, pp. 250–251
- [84] Tourtellot, p. 203
- [85] Fischer, p. 256
- [86] Fischer, p. 258
- [87] Tourtellot, p. 197
- [88] Fischer, p. 257
- [89] Hurd, p. 181
- [90] Fischer, p. 261
- [91] Brooks, p. 96
- [92] Fischer, p. 265
- [93] Fischer, pp. 275–276
- [94] Fischer, p. 263
- [95] Fischer, p. 279
- [96] Fischer, p. 280
- [97] Fischer, p. 271
- [98] Fischer, pp. 327–328
- [99] Fischer, p. 329
- [100] Napierkowski
- [101] Fischer, pp. 331–333
- [102] Fischer, pp. 336–338
- [103] Fischer, pp. 340–342
- [104] Minuteman National Historical Park Things To Do
- [105] "John Buttrick Memorial" (<http://siris-artinventories.si.edu/ipac20/ipac.jsp?session=1W80430D191F9.6618&profile=ariall&source=~!siartinventories&view=subscriptionsummary&uri=full=3100001~!340743~!0&ri=5&aspect=Browse&menu=search&ipp=20&spp=20&staffonly=&term=Quinn,+Edmond+Thomas,+1868-1929,+sculptor.&index=AUTHOR&uindex=&aspect=Browse&menu=search&ri=5>). Smithsonian Institution. . Retrieved 2010-08-12.
- [106] Department of the Army, Lineage and Honors, 181st Infantry. Reproduced in Sawicki 1981, pp. 354–355.
- [107] Department of the Army, Lineage and Honors, 182nd Infantry. Reproduced in Sawicki 1981, pp. 355–357.
- [108] Department of the Army, Lineage and Honors, 101st Engineer Battalion
- [109] Department of the Army, Lineage and Honors, 125th Quartermaster Company. <http://states.ng.mil/sites/MA/News/Pages/125th%20Quartermaster%20Company%20honored%20for%20storied%20lineage%20and%20service%20at%20Lexington%20and%20Concord.aspx>
- [110] Massachusetts Legal Holidays
- [111] Maine Legal Holidays
- [112] Wisconsin School Observance Days
- [113] Concord Centennial Celebration Report
- [114] Scott's United States Stamp Catalog: First Day Covers
- [115] Time Magazine, April 25, 1974
- [116] New York Times on Ford's appearance



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## External links

- National Park Service site for Minute Man National Historical Park (<http://www.nps.gov/mima/>)
- Why We Remember Lexington and Concord and the 19th of April (<http://rjohara.net/gen/wars/minuteman>)
- Rescued cannon returns to Concord ([http://www.nps.gov/mima/My Webs/myweb/The Hancock Returns.htm](http://www.nps.gov/mima/My%20Webs/myweb/The%20Hancock%20Returns.htm))
- Battles of Lexington and Concord (<http://www.generalatomic.com/AmericanHistory/lexington.html>)
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- Statements of American combatants at Lexington and Concord (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/20636/20636-8.txt>) contained in supplement "Official Papers Concerning the Skirmishes at Lexington and Concord" to *The Military Journals of Private Soldiers, 1758-1775*, by Abraham Tomlinson for the Poughkeepsie, NY museum, 1855.
- Teach this article at the Wikischool ([http://www.wikischool.us/instructor\\_pages/vol\\_1\\_files/Page315.htm](http://www.wikischool.us/instructor_pages/vol_1_files/Page315.htm))

# Battle of Waterloo

The **Battle of Waterloo** was fought on Sunday, 18 June 1815 near Waterloo in present-day Belgium, then part of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. An Imperial French army under the command of Emperor Napoleon was defeated by combined armies of the Seventh Coalition, an Anglo-Allied army under the command of the Duke of Wellington combined with a Prussian army under the command of Gebhard von Blücher. It was the culminating battle of the Waterloo Campaign and Napoleon's last. The defeat at Waterloo ended his rule as Emperor of the French, marking the end of his Hundred Days return from exile.

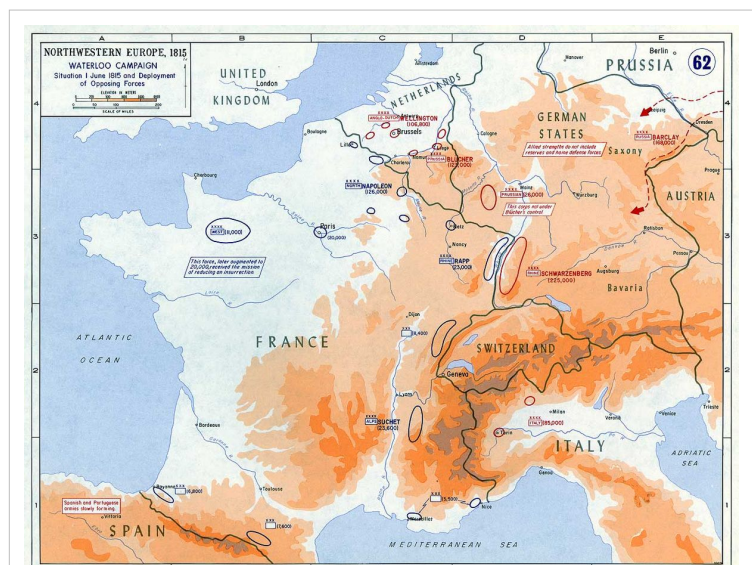
Upon Napoleon's return to power in 1815, many states that had opposed him formed the Seventh Coalition and began to mobilise armies. Two large forces under Wellington and Blücher assembled close to the north-eastern border of France. Napoleon chose to attack in the hope of destroying them before they could join in a coordinated invasion of France with other members of the coalition. The decisive engagement of this three-day Waterloo Campaign (16–19 June 1815) occurred at the Battle of Waterloo. According to Wellington, the battle was "the nearest-run thing you ever saw in your life."<sup>[1]</sup>

Napoleon delayed giving battle until noon on 18 June to allow the ground to dry. Wellington's army, positioned across the Brussels road on the Mont-Saint-Jean escarpment, withstood repeated attacks by the French, until, in the evening, the Prussians arrived in force and broke through Napoleon's right flank. At that moment, Wellington's Anglo-Allied army counter-attacked and drove the French army in disorder from the field. Pursuing coalition forces entered France and restored King Louis XVIII to the French throne. Napoleon abdicated, surrendered to the British, and was exiled to Saint Helena, where he died in 1821.

The battlefield is in present-day Belgium, about 8 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) south by south-east of Brussels, and about 1 mile (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) from the town of Waterloo. The site of the battlefield is today dominated by a large monument, the Lion Mound. As this mound was constructed from earth taken from the battlefield itself, the contemporary topography of the part of the battlefield around the mound has not been preserved.

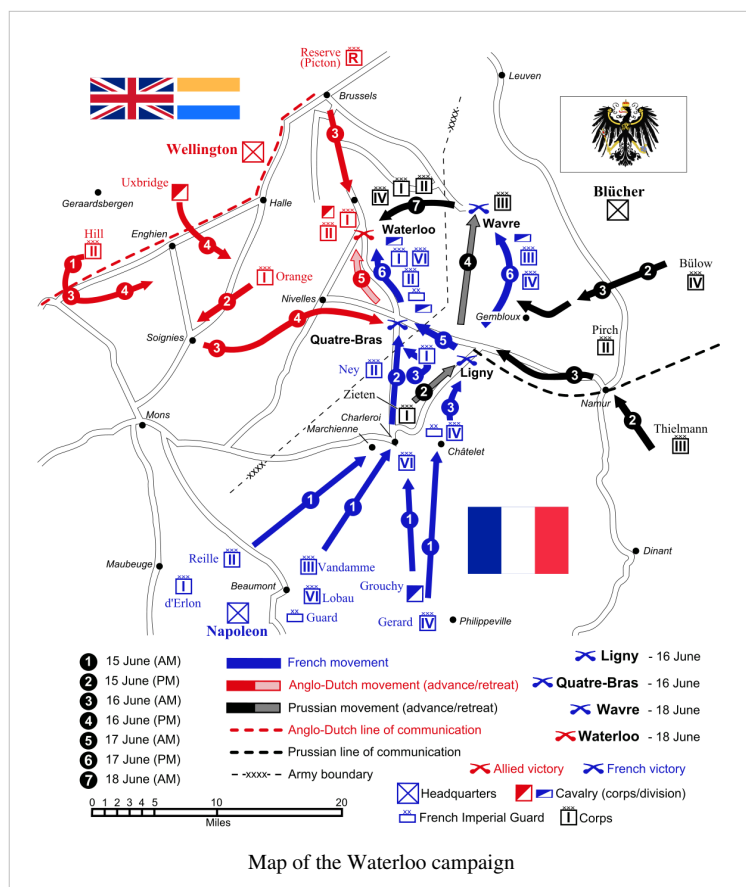
## Prelude

On 13 March 1815, six days before Napoleon reached Paris, the powers at the Congress of Vienna declared him an outlaw.<sup>[2]</sup> Four days later, the United Kingdom, Russia, Austria, and Prussia mobilised armies to defeat Napoleon.<sup>[3]</sup> Napoleon knew that once his attempts at dissuading one or more of the Seventh Coalition allies from invading France had failed, his only chance of remaining in power was to attack before the coalition mobilised. If he could destroy the existing coalition forces south of Brussels before they were reinforced, he might be able to drive the British back to the sea and knock the Prussians out of the war. An additional



Strategic situation in Western Europe in 1815 : 250.000 Frenchmen faced a coalition of about 850.000 soldiers on four fronts. In addition, Napoleon was forced to leave 20.000 men in Western France to reduce a royalist insurrection.

consideration was that there were many French-speaking sympathisers in Belgium and a French victory might trigger a friendly revolution there. Also, the British troops in Belgium were largely second-line troops; most of the veterans of the Peninsular War had been sent to America to fight the War of 1812.<sup>[4]</sup>



Wellington's initial dispositions were intended to counter the threat of Napoleon enveloping the Coalition armies by moving through Mons to the south-west of Brussels.<sup>[5]</sup> This would have cut Wellington's communications with his base at Ostend, but would have pushed his army closer to Blücher's. Napoleon manipulated Wellington's fear of this loss of his supply chain from the channel ports with false intelligence.<sup>[6]</sup> He divided his army into a left wing commanded by Marshal Ney, a right wing commanded by Marshal Grouchy, and a reserve, which he commanded personally (although all three elements remained close enough to support one another). Crossing the frontier near Charleroi before dawn on 15 June, the French rapidly overran Coalition outposts, securing Napoleon's "central position" between Wellington's and Blücher's armies.

Only very late on the night of 15 June was Wellington certain that the Charleroi attack was the main French thrust. In the early hours of 16 June, at the Duchess of Richmond's ball in Brussels, he received a dispatch from the Prince of Orange and was shocked by the speed of Napoleon's advance. He hastily ordered his army to concentrate on Quatre Bras, where the Prince of Orange, with the brigade of Prince Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar, was holding a tenuous position against the soldiers of Ney's left wing.<sup>[7]</sup> Ney's orders were to secure the crossroads of Quatre Bras, so that, if necessary, he could later swing east and reinforce Napoleon.



The resurgent Napoleon's strategy was to isolate the Allied and Prussian armies, and annihilate each one separately

Napoleon moved against the concentrated Prussian army first. On 16 June, with a part of the reserve and the right wing of the army, he attacked and defeated Blücher's

Prussians at the Battle of Ligny. The Prussian centre gave way under more heavy French assaults, but the flanks held their ground. Ney, meanwhile, found the crossroads of Quatre Bras lightly held by the Prince of Orange, who successfully repelled Ney's initial attacks, but was gradually driven back by overwhelming numbers of French troops. First reinforcements and then Wellington himself arrived. He took command and drove Ney back, securing the crossroads by early evening, but too late to send help to the Prussians, who were defeated at the Battle of Ligny on the same day. The Prussian defeat made Wellington's position at Quatre Bras untenable, so the next day he withdrew northwards, to a defensive position he had personally reconnoitred the previous year—the low ridge of Mont-Saint-Jean, south of the village of Waterloo and the Sonian Forest.<sup>[8]</sup>



Napoleon's headquarters during the battle, the Caillou ("Pebble") Farm

The Prussian retreat from Ligny went uninterrupted, and seemingly unnoticed, by the French.<sup>[9]</sup> The bulk of their rearguard units held their positions until about midnight, and some elements did not move out until the following morning, completely ignored by the French.<sup>[9]</sup> Crucially, the Prussians did not retreat to the east, along their own lines of communication. Instead, they too fell back northwards—parallel to Wellington's line of march, still within supporting distance, and in communication with him throughout. The Prussians rallied on Bülow's IV Corps, which had not been engaged at Ligny and was in a strong position south of Wavre.<sup>[9]</sup>

Napoleon, with the reserves, made a late start on 17 June and joined Ney at Quatre Bras at 13:00 to attack Wellington's army, but found the position empty. The French pursued Wellington, but the result was only a brief cavalry skirmish in Genappe just as torrential rain set in for the night. Before leaving Ligny, Napoleon ordered Grouchy, commander of the right wing, to follow up the retreating Prussians with 33,000 men. A late start, uncertainty about the direction the Prussians had taken, and the vagueness of the orders given to him meant that Grouchy was too late to prevent the Prussian army reaching Wavre, from where it could march to support Wellington. By the end of 17 June, Wellington's army had arrived at its position at Waterloo, with the main body of Napoleon's army following. Blücher's army was gathering in and around Wavre, around 8 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) to the east of the city.

## Armies

Three armies were involved in the battle: Napoleon's *Armée du Nord*; a multinational army under Wellington; and a Prussian army under Blücher. The French army of around 69,000 consisted of 48,000 infantry, 14,000 cavalry, and 7,000 artillery with 250 guns.<sup>[10]</sup> Napoleon had used conscription to fill the ranks of the French army throughout his rule, but he did not conscript men for the 1815 campaign. All his troops were veterans of at least one campaign who had returned more or less voluntarily to the colours. The cavalry in particular was both numerous and formidable, and included fourteen regiments of armoured heavy cavalry and seven of highly versatile lancers. Neither Coalition army had any armoured troops at all, and Wellington had only a handful of lancers.



The Duke of Wellington, a veteran general of the Peninsular War, commanded an army of British, Dutch, and German forces.



Wellington claimed he had "an infamous army, very weak and ill-equipped, and a very inexperienced Staff".<sup>[11]</sup> His troops consisted of 67,000 men: 50,000 infantry, 11,000 cavalry, and 6,000 artillery with 150 guns. Of these, 25,000 were British, with another 6,000 from the King's German Legion. All of the British Army troops were regular soldiers but only 7,000 of them were Peninsular War veterans.<sup>[12]</sup> In addition, there were 17,000 Dutch and Belgian troops, 11,000 from Hanover, 6,000 from Brunswick, and 3,000 from Nassau.<sup>[13]</sup>



William, Prince of Orange showed personal bravery in the battle.

Many of the troops in the Coalition armies were inexperienced.<sup>[14][15]</sup> The Dutch army had been re-established in 1815, following the earlier defeat of Napoleon. With the exception of the British and some from Hanover and Brunswick who had fought with the British army in Spain, many of the professional soldiers in the Coalition armies had spent some of their time in the French army or in armies allied to the Napoleonic regime. Wellington was also acutely short of heavy cavalry, having only seven British and three Dutch regiments. The Duke of York imposed many of his staff officers on Wellington, including his second-in-command, the Earl of Uxbridge. Uxbridge commanded the cavalry and had carte blanche from Wellington to commit these forces at his discretion. Wellington stationed a further 17,000 troops at Halle, 8 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) away to the west; they were not recalled to participate in the battle but were to serve as a fallback position should the battle be lost.

They were mostly composed of Dutch troops under William, Prince of Orange's younger brother Prince Frederik of the Netherlands.

The Prussian army was in the throes of reorganisation. In 1815, the former Reserve regiments, Legions, and *Freikorps* volunteer formations from the wars of 1813–1814 were in the process of being absorbed into the line, along with many *Landwehr* (militia) regiments. The *Landwehr* were mostly untrained and unequipped when they arrived in Belgium. The Prussian cavalry were in a similar state.<sup>[16]</sup> Its artillery was also reorganising and did not give its best performance – guns and equipment continued to arrive during and after the battle. Off-setting these handicaps, however, the Prussian Army did have excellent and professional leadership in its General Staff organisation. These officers came from four schools developed for this purpose and thus worked to a common standard of training. This system was in marked contrast to the conflicting, vague orders issued by the French army. This staff system ensured that before Ligny, three-quarters of the Prussian army concentrated for battle at 24 hours notice. After Ligny, the Prussian army, although defeated, was able to realign its supply train, reorganise itself, and intervene decisively on the Waterloo battlefield within 48 hours.<sup>[17]</sup> Two and a half Prussian army corps, or 48,000 men, were engaged at Waterloo – two brigades under Friedrich von Bülow, commander of IV Corps, attacked Lobau at 16:30, while Zieten's I Corps and parts of Georg von Pirch's II Corps engaged at about 18:00.

## Battlefield

The Waterloo position was a strong one. It consisted of a long ridge running east-west, perpendicular to, and bisected by, the main road to Brussels. Along the crest of the ridge ran the Ohain road, a deep sunken lane. Near the crossroads with the Brussels road was a large elm tree that was roughly in the centre of Wellington's position and served as his command post for much of the day. Wellington deployed his infantry in a line just behind the crest of the ridge following the Ohain road. Using the reverse slope, as he had many times previously, Wellington concealed his



The famous *morne plaine* described by Victor Hugo and the Lion Mound.

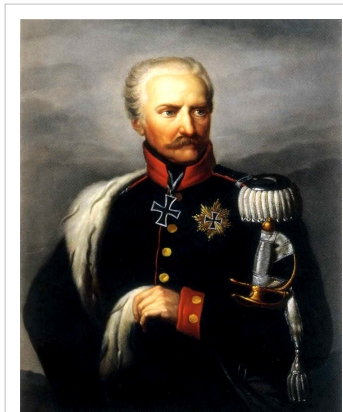
strength from the French, with the exception of his skirmishers and artillery.<sup>[18]</sup> The length of front of the battlefield was also relatively short at 2.5 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km). This allowed Wellington to draw up his forces in depth, which he did in the centre and on the right, all the way towards the village of Braine-l'Alleud, in the expectation that the Prussians would reinforce his left during the day.<sup>[19]</sup>

In front of the ridge, there were three positions that could be fortified. On the extreme right were the château, garden, and orchard of Hougoumont. This was a large and well-built country house, initially hidden in trees. The house faced north along a sunken, covered lane (usually described by the British as "the hollow-way") along which it could be supplied. On the extreme left was the hamlet of Papelotte. Both Hougoumont and Papelotte were fortified and garrisoned, and thus anchored Wellington's flanks securely. Papelotte also commanded the road to Wavre that the Prussians would use to send reinforcements to Wellington's position. On the western side of the main road, and in front of the rest of Wellington's line, was the farmhouse and orchard of La Haye Sainte, which was garrisoned with 400 light infantry of the King's German Legion.<sup>[20]</sup> On the opposite side of the road was a disused sand quarry, where the 95th Rifles were posted as sharpshooters.<sup>[21]</sup> This position presented a formidable challenge to an attacker. Any attempt to turn Wellington's right would entail taking the entrenched Hougoumont position; any attack on his right centre would mean the attackers would have to march between enfilading fire from Hougoumont and La Haye Sainte. On the left, any attack would also be enfiladed by fire from La Haye Sainte and its adjoining sandpit, and any attempt at turning the left flank would entail fighting through the streets and hedgerows of Papelotte, and some very wet ground.<sup>[22]</sup>

The French army formed on the slopes of another ridge to the south. Napoleon could not see Wellington's positions, so he drew his forces up symmetrically about the Brussels road. On the right was I Corps under d'Erlon with 16,000 infantry and 1,500 cavalry, plus a cavalry reserve of 4,700. On the left was II Corps under Reille with 13,000 infantry, and 1,300 cavalry, and a cavalry reserve of 4,600. In the centre about the road south of the inn *La Belle Alliance* were a reserve including Lobau's VI Corps with 6,000 men, the 13,000 infantry of the Imperial Guard, and a cavalry reserve of 2,000.<sup>[23]</sup> In the right rear of the French position was the substantial village of Plancenoit, and at the extreme right, the *Bois de Paris* wood. Napoleon initially commanded the battle from Rossomme farm, where he could see the entire battlefield, but moved to a position near *La Belle Alliance* early in the afternoon. Command on the battlefield (which was largely hidden from his view) was delegated to Ney.<sup>[24]</sup>

## Battle

Wellington rose at around 02:00 or 03:00 on 18 June, and wrote letters until dawn. He had earlier written to Blücher confirming that he would give battle at Mont-Saint-Jean if Blücher could provide him with at least one corps; otherwise he would retreat towards Brussels. At a late-night council, Blücher's chief of staff, August Neidhardt von Gneisenau, had been distrustful of Wellington's strategy, but Blücher persuaded him that they should march to join Wellington's army. In the morning Wellington duly received a reply from Blücher, promising to support him with three corps.<sup>[25]</sup> From 06:00 Wellington was in the field supervising the deployment of his forces. At Wavre, the Prussian IV Corps under Bülow was designated to lead the march to Waterloo as it was in the best shape, not having been involved in the Battle of Ligny. Although they had not taken casualties, IV Corps had been marching for two days, covering the retreat of the three other corps of the Prussian army from the battlefield of Ligny. They had been posted farthest away from the battlefield, and progress was very slow. The roads were in poor condition after the night's heavy rain, and Bülow's men had to



Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher, who had led one of the coalition armies defeating Napoleon at the Battle of Leipzig, commanded the Prussian army



pass through the congested streets of Wavre and move up 88 artillery pieces. Matters were not helped by a fire which broke out in Wavre and blocked several streets along Bülow's intended route. As a result, the last part of the corps left at 10:00, six hours after the leading elements had moved out towards Waterloo. Bülow's men were followed to Waterloo first by I Corps and then by II Corps.<sup>[26]</sup>

Napoleon breakfasted off silver plate at *Le Caillou*, the house where he had spent the night. When Soult suggested that Grouchy should be recalled to join the main force, Napoleon said, "Just because you have all been beaten by Wellington, you think he's a good general. I tell you Wellington is a bad general, the English are bad troops, and this affair is nothing more than eating breakfast."<sup>[27]</sup> However, Napoleon's surprisingly dismissive statements should not be taken at face value, given the Emperor's maxim that "in war, morale is everything" and that praising the enemy is always wrong, as it reduces one's morale. Indeed, he had been seen engaging in such pre-battle, morale-boosting harangues on a number of occasions in the past and on the morning of the battle of Waterloo he had to deal with his chief of staff's pessimism and nervousness and had to respond to several persistent and almost defeatist objections from some of his senior generals.<sup>[28]</sup> Later on, being told by his brother, Jerome, of some gossip overheard by a waiter between British officers at lunch at the 'King of Spain' inn in Genappe that the Prussians were to march over from Wavre, Napoleon declared that the Prussians would need at least two days to recover and would be dealt with by Grouchy.<sup>[29]</sup> Surprisingly, Jerome's overheard gossip aside, the French commanders present at the pre-battle conference at *Le Caillou* had no information about the alarming proximity of the Prussians and did not suspect that Blücher's men would start erupting onto the field of battle in great numbers just five hours later.<sup>[30]</sup>



Battle of Mont-Saint-Jean

Napoleon had delayed the start of the battle owing to the sodden ground, which would have made manoeuvring cavalry and artillery difficult. In addition, many of his forces had bivouacked well to the south of *La Belle Alliance*. At 10:00, in response to a dispatch he had received from Grouchy six hours earlier, he sent a reply telling Grouchy to "head for Wavre [to Grouchy's north] in order to draw near to us [to the west of Grouchy]" and then "push before him" the Prussians to arrive at Waterloo "as soon as possible".<sup>[31]</sup>

At 11:00, Napoleon drafted his general order: Reille's Corps on the left and d'Erlon's Corps to the right were to attack the village of Mont-Saint-Jean and keep abreast of one another. This order assumed Wellington's battle-line was in the village, rather than at the more forward position on the ridge.<sup>[32]</sup> To enable this, Jerome's division would make an initial attack on Hougomont, which Napoleon expected would draw in Wellington's reserves,<sup>[33]</sup> since its loss would threaten his communications with the sea. A *grande batterie* of the reserve artillery of I, II, and VI Corps was to then bombard the centre of Wellington's position from about 13:00. D'Erlon's corps would then attack Wellington's left, break through, and roll up his line from east to west. In his memoirs, Napoleon wrote that his intention was to separate Wellington's army from the Prussians and drive it back towards the sea.<sup>[34]</sup>

## Hougoumont



Clément-Auguste Andrieux's 1852 *The Battle of Waterloo*

The historian Andrew Roberts notes that "It is a curious fact about the Battle of Waterloo that no one is absolutely certain when it actually began".<sup>[35]</sup> Wellington recorded in his dispatches that at "about ten o'clock [Napoleon] commenced a furious attack upon our post at Hougoumont".<sup>[36]</sup> Other sources state that the attack began around 11:30.<sup>[37]</sup> The house and its immediate environs were defended by four light companies of Guards, and the wood and park by Hanoverian *Jäger* and the 1/2nd<sup>[38]</sup> Nassau.<sup>[39]</sup> The initial attack by Bauduin's brigade emptied the wood

and park, but was driven back by heavy British artillery fire, and cost Bauduin his life. As the British guns were distracted by a duel with French artillery, a second attack by Soye's brigade and what had been Bauduin's succeeded in reaching the north gate of the house. Some French troops managed to enter its courtyard before the gate was resecured. The 2nd Coldstream Guards and 2/3rd Foot Guards then arrived and repulsed the attack.

Fighting continued around Hougoumont all afternoon. Its surroundings were heavily invested by French light infantry, and coordinated attacks were made against the troops behind Hougoumont. Wellington's army defended the house and the hollow way running north from it. In the afternoon, Napoleon personally ordered the house to be shelled to set it on fire,<sup>[41]</sup> resulting in the destruction of all but the chapel. Du Plat's brigade of the King's German Legion was brought forward to defend the hollow way, which they had to do without senior officers. Eventually they were relieved by the 71st Foot, a British infantry regiment. Adam's brigade was further reinforced by Hugh Halkett's 3rd Hanoverian Brigade, and successfully repulsed further infantry and cavalry attacks sent by Reille. Hougoumont held out until the end of the battle.



Gate on the north side assaulted by the *1st Légère* who were led by *sous-lieutenant* Legros<sup>[40]</sup>

I had occupied that post with a detachment from General Byng's brigade of Guards, which was in position in its rear; and it was some time under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel MacDonald, and afterwards of Colonel Home; and I am happy to add that it was maintained, throughout the day, with the utmost gallantry by these brave troops, notwithstanding the repeated efforts of large bodies of the enemy to obtain possession of it. —Wellington,<sup>[42]</sup>

When I reached Lloyd's abandoned guns, I stood near them for about a minute to contemplate the scene: it was grand beyond description. Hougoumont and its wood sent up a broad flame through the dark masses of smoke that overhung the field; beneath this cloud the French were indistinctly visible. Here a waving mass of long red feathers could be seen; there, gleams as from a sheet of steel showed that the cuirassiers were moving; 400 cannon were belching forth fire and death on every side; the roaring and shouting were indistinguishably commixed—together they gave me an idea of a labouring volcano. Bodies of infantry and cavalry were pouring down on us, and it was time to leave contemplation, so I moved towards our columns, which were standing up in square.

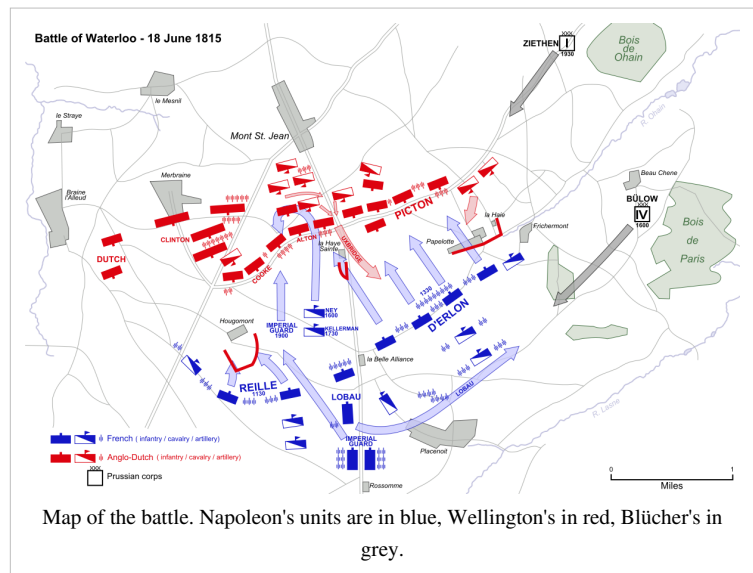
—Major Macready, Light Division, 30th British Regiment, Halkett's brigade,<sup>[43]</sup>

The fighting at Hougoumont has often been characterised as a diversionary attack to draw in Wellington's reserves which escalated into an all-day battle and drew in French reserves instead.<sup>[44]</sup> In fact there is a good case to believe

that both Napoleon and Wellington thought that holding Hougoumont was key to winning the battle. Hougoumont was a part of the battlefield that Napoleon could see clearly,<sup>[41]</sup> and he continued to direct resources towards it and its surroundings all afternoon (33 battalions in all, 14,000 troops). Similarly, though the house never contained a large number of troops, Wellington devoted 21 battalions (12,000 troops) over the course of the afternoon in keeping the hollow way open to allow fresh troops and ammunition to reach the buildings. He moved several artillery batteries from his hard-pressed centre to support Hougoumont,<sup>[45]</sup> and later stated that "the success of the battle turned upon closing the gates at Hougoumont".<sup>[46]</sup>

### First French infantry attack

The 80 guns of Napoleon's *grande batterie* drew up in the centre. These opened fire at 11:50, according to Lord Hill (commander of the Anglo-allied II Corps),<sup>[47]</sup> while other sources put the time between noon and 13:30.<sup>[48]</sup> The *grande batterie* was too far back to aim accurately, and the only other troops they could see were part of the Dutch division (the others were employing Wellington's characteristic "reverse slope defence").<sup>[49]</sup> In addition, the soft ground prevented the cannon balls from bouncing far, and the French gunners covered Wellington's entire deployment, so the density of hits was low. The idea was not to cause a large amount of physical damage, however, but in the words of Napoleon's orders, "to astonish the enemy and shake his morale".<sup>[50]</sup>



At about 13:00, Napoleon saw the first columns of Prussians around the village of Lasne-Chapelle-Saint-Lambert, four or five miles (three hours march for an army) away from his right flank.<sup>[50]</sup> Napoleon's reaction was to have Marshal Soult send a message to Grouchy telling him to come towards the battlefield and attack the arriving Prussians.<sup>[51]</sup> Grouchy, however, had been executing Napoleon's previous orders to follow the Prussians "with your sword against his back" towards Wavre, and was by then too far away to reach Waterloo. Grouchy was advised by his subordinate, Gérard, to "march to the sound of the guns", but stuck to his orders and engaged the Prussian III Corps rear guard under the command of Lieutenant-General Baron Johann von Thielmann at the Battle of Wavre. Moreover, Soult's letter ordering Grouchy to move quickly to join Napoleon and attack Bulow wouldn't actually reach Grouchy until after 18:00.

A little after 13:00, I Corps' attack began. D'Erlon, like Ney, had encountered Wellington in Spain, and was aware of the British commander's favoured tactic of using massed short-range musketry to drive off infantry columns. Rather than use the usual nine-deep French columns deployed abreast of one another, therefore, each division advanced in closely spaced battalion lines behind one another. This allowed them to concentrate their fire,<sup>[52]</sup> but it did not leave room for them to change formation.

The formation was initially effective. Its leftmost division, under François-Xavier Donzelot, advanced on La Haye Sainte. While one battalion engaged the defenders from the front, the following battalions fanned out to either side and, with the support of several squadrons of cuirassiers, succeeded in isolating the farmhouse. The Prince of Orange saw that La Haye Sainte had been cut off, and tried to reinforce it by sending forward the Hanoverian Lüneberg Battalion in line. Cuirassiers concealed in a fold in the ground caught and destroyed it in minutes, and then rode on past La Haye Sainte almost to the crest of the ridge, where they covered d'Erlon's left flank as his attack developed.

At about 13:30, d'Erlon started to advance his three other divisions, some 14,000 men over a front of about 1,000 metres (1,094 yds) against Wellington's left wing. They faced 6,000 men: the first line consisted of the Dutch 1st "Van Bijlandt" brigade (Bijlandt) of the 2nd Dutch division. The second line consisted of British and Hanoverian troops under Sir Thomas Picton, who were lying down in dead ground behind the ridge. All had suffered badly at Quatre Bras. In addition, the Bijlandt brigade, posted towards the centre of the battlefield, had been ordered to deploy its skirmishers in the hollow road and on the forward slope. The rest of the brigade was lying down just behind the road, where they were ordered to earlier that day at 09:00 hours (they camped the previous night on the forward slope).<sup>[53][54][55][56][57][58][59]</sup>

As the French advanced, Bijlandt's skirmishers withdrew to the sunken lane, to their parent battalions.<sup>[60][61][62]</sup>

As these skirmishers were retreating through the British skirmish lines they were booed by some British troops, thinking they were leaving the field. At the moment these skirmishers were joining their parent battalions the brigade was ordered to its feet and started to return fire.<sup>[63]</sup> On the left of the brigade, where the 7th Dutch militia stood, a "few files were shot down and an opening in the line thus occurred" (original quotes of Van Zuylen, the chief of staff of the Dutch 2nd division).<sup>[64]</sup>

The battalion had no reserves and was unable to close the gap. D'Erlon's troops pushed through this gap in the line and the remaining battalions in the Van Bijlandt brigade (8th Dutch militia and Belgian 7th Line Battalion) were forced to retreat to the square of the 5th Dutch militia, which was in reserve between Picton's troops, about 100 paces to the rear. There they regrouped under the Command of Colonel Van Zuylen van Nijvelt and general Constant-de-Rebeque. A moment later the Prince of Orange ordered a counterattack, which actually occurred around 10 minutes later.<sup>[65][66][67]</sup>

In the mean time, d'Erlon's men began to ascend the slope, and as they did so, Picton's men stood up and opened fire. The French infantry returned fire and successfully pressed the British troops; although the attack faltered at the centre,<sup>[68]</sup> the line in front of d'Erlon's left started to crumble. Picton was killed after ordering the counter-attack and the British and Hanoverian troops also began to give way under the pressure of numbers.



French infantry advancing.





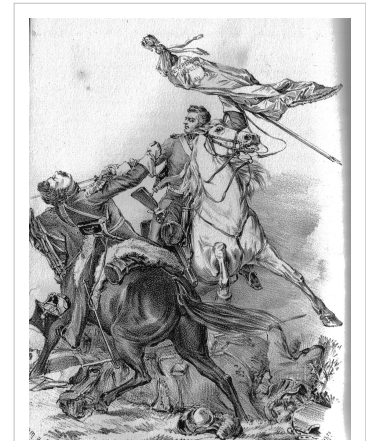
The Household Brigade crossed the crest of the Allied position and charged downhill. The cuirassiers guarding d'Erlon's left flank were still dispersed, and so were swept over the deeply sunken main road and then routed.<sup>[73]</sup> The sunken lane acted as a trap which funnelled the flight of the French cavalry to their own right, away from the British cavalry. Some of the cuirassiers then found themselves hemmed in by the steep sides of the sunken lane, with a confused mass of their own infantry in front of them, the 95th Rifles firing at them from the north side of the lane, and Somerset's heavy cavalry still pressing them from behind.<sup>[74]</sup> The novelty of fighting armoured foes impressed the British cavalrymen, as was recorded by the commander of the Household Brigade.

The blows of the sabres on the cuirasses sounded like braziers at work.

—Lord Edward Somerset,<sup>[75]</sup>

Continuing their attack, the squadrons on the left of the Household Brigade then destroyed Aulard's brigade. Despite attempts to recall them, however, they continued past La Haye Sainte and found themselves at the bottom of the hill on blown horses facing Schmitz's brigade formed in squares.

To their left, the Union Brigade suddenly swept through the infantry lines (giving rise to the legend that some of the 92nd Gordon Highland Regiment clung onto their stirrups and accompanied them into the charge).<sup>[76]</sup> From the centre leftwards, the Royal Dragoons destroyed Bourgeois' brigade, capturing the eagle of the 105th *Ligne*. The Inniskillings routed the other brigade of Quoit's division, and the Greys destroyed most of Nogue's brigade, capturing the eagle of the 45th *Ligne*.<sup>[77]</sup> On Wellington's extreme left, Durutte's division had time to form squares and fend off groups of Greys.



Sergeant Ewart of the Scots Greys  
capturing the eagle of the 45<sup>ème</sup>  
*Ligne* by Richard Ansdell



Private of the Cheveau-légers of the line (lancers)  
who routed the Union Brigade.

As with the Household Cavalry, the officers of the Royals and Inniskillings found it very difficult to rein back their troops, who lost all cohesion. James Hamilton, commander of the Greys (who were supposed to form a reserve) ordered a continuation of the charge to the French *grande batterie*. Though the Greys had neither the time nor means to disable the cannon or carry them off, they put very many out of action as the gun crews were killed or fled the battlefield.<sup>[78]</sup>

Napoleon promptly responded by ordering a counter-attack by the cuirassier brigades of Farine and Travers and Jaquinot's two Cheveau-léger (lancer) regiments in the I Corps light cavalry division. The result was very heavy losses for the British cavalry.<sup>[79]</sup> All figures quoted for the losses of the cavalry brigades as a result of this charge are estimates, as casualties were only noted down after the day of the battle and were for the battle as a whole.<sup>[80][81]</sup> Some historians believe the official rolls tend to overestimate the number of cavalrymen present in their squadrons on the field of battle and that the proportionate losses were, as a result, considerably higher than the numbers on paper might suggest.<sup>[82]</sup> The Union Brigade lost heavily in both officers and men killed (including its commander, William

Ponsonby, and Colonel Hamilton of the Scots Greys) and wounded. The 2nd Life Guards and the King's Dragoon Guards of the Household Brigade also lost heavily (with Colonel Fuller, commander of the King's DG, killed).

However, the 1st Life Guards, on the extreme right of the charge, and the Blues, who formed a reserve, had kept their cohesion and consequently suffered significantly fewer casualties. A counter-charge, by British light dragoons

under Major-General Vandeleur and Dutch-Belgian light dragoons and hussars under Major-General Ghigny on the left wing, and Dutch-Belgian *carabiniers* under Major-General Tripp in the centre, repelled the French cavalry. During this charge, eyewitness accounts recall the 8th Belgian Hussars fighting with "insane gallantry", as they put it.<sup>[83][84]</sup>

Many popular histories suggest that the British heavy cavalry were destroyed as a viable force following their first, epic charge. Examination of eyewitness accounts reveal, however, that far from being ineffective, they continued to provide very valuable services. They counter-charged French cavalry numerous times (both brigades),<sup>[85]</sup> halted a combined cavalry and infantry attack (Household Brigade only),<sup>[86][87]</sup> were used to bolster the morale of those units in their vicinity at times of crisis, and filled gaps in the Anglo-Allied line caused by high casualties in infantry formations (both brigades).<sup>[88]</sup> This service was rendered at a very high cost, as close combat with French cavalry, carbine fire, infantry musketry and – more deadly than all of these – artillery fire steadily eroded the number of effectives<sup>[89]</sup> in the two brigades. At the end of the fighting the two brigades, by this time combined, could muster only a few composite squadrons.

Some 20,000 French troops had been committed to this attack. Its failure cost Napoleon not only heavy casualties – 3,000 prisoners were taken – but valuable time, as the Prussians now began to appear on the field to his right. Napoleon sent his reserve, Lobau's VI corps and two cavalry divisions, some 15,000 troops, to hold them back. With this, Napoleon had committed all of his infantry reserves, except the Guard, and he now had to beat Wellington not only quickly, but with inferior numbers.<sup>[90]</sup>

### The French cavalry attack

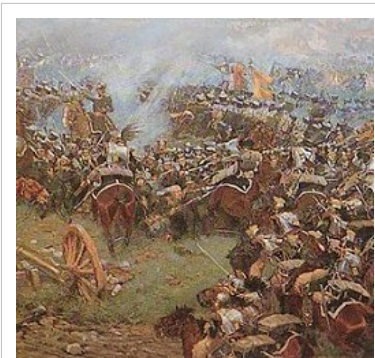
A little before 16:00, Ney noted an apparent exodus from Wellington's centre. He mistook the movement of casualties to the rear for the beginnings of a retreat, and sought to exploit it. Following the defeat of d'Erlon's Corps, Ney had few infantry reserves left, as most of the infantry been committed either to the futile Hougomont attack or to the defence of the French right. Ney therefore tried to break Wellington's centre with cavalry alone.<sup>[91]</sup> Initially Milhaud's reserve cavalry corps of cuirassiers and Lefebvre-Desnoëttes' light cavalry division of the Imperial Guard, some 4,800 sabres, were committed. When these were repulsed, Kellermann's heavy cavalry corps and Guyot's heavy cavalry of the Guard were added to the massed assault, a total of around 9,000 cavalry in 67 squadrons.<sup>[92]</sup>

Wellington's infantry responded by forming squares (hollow box-formations four ranks deep). Squares were much smaller than usually depicted in paintings of the battle – a 500-man battalion square would have been no more than 60 feet (18 m) in length on a side. Vulnerable to artillery or infantry, squares that stood their ground were deadly to cavalry, because they could not be outflanked and because horses would not charge into a hedge of bayonets. Wellington ordered his artillery crews to take shelter within the squares as the cavalry approached, and to return to their guns and resume fire as they retreated.

Witnesses in the British infantry recorded as many as 12 assaults, though this probably includes successive waves of the same general attack; the number of general assaults was undoubtedly far fewer. Kellermann, recognising the futility of the attacks, tried to reserve the elite *carabinier* brigade from joining in, but eventually Ney spotted them and insisted on their involvement.<sup>[93]</sup>

A British eyewitness of the first French cavalry attack, an officer in the Foot Guards, recorded his impressions very lucidly and somewhat poetically:

About four P.M. the enemy's artillery in front of us ceased firing all of a sudden, and we saw large masses of cavalry advance: not a man present who survived could have forgotten in after life the awful grandeur of that



"French Cuirassiers", by Louis Dumoulin.



charge. You discovered at a distance what appeared to be an overwhelming, long moving line, which, ever advancing, glittered like a stormy wave of the sea when it catches the sunlight. On they came until they got near enough, whilst the very earth seemed to vibrate beneath the thundering tramp of the mounted host. One might suppose that nothing could have resisted the shock of this terrible moving mass. They were the famous cuirassiers, almost all old soldiers, who had distinguished themselves on most of the battlefields of Europe. In an almost incredibly short period they were within twenty yards of us, shouting "*Vive l'Empereur!*" The word of command, "Prepare to receive cavalry", had been given, every man in the front ranks knelt, and a wall bristling with steel, held together by steady hands, presented itself to the infuriated cuirassiers.

—Captain Rees Howell Gronow, Foot Guards, <sup>[94]</sup>

In essence this type of massed cavalry attack relied almost entirely on psychological shock for effect.<sup>[95]</sup> Close artillery support could disrupt infantry squares and allow cavalry to penetrate; at Waterloo, however, co-operation between the French cavalry and artillery was not impressive. The French artillery did not get close enough to the Anglo-allied infantry in sufficient numbers to be decisive.<sup>[96]</sup> Artillery fire between charges did produce mounting casualties, but most of this fire was at relatively long range and was often indirect, at targets beyond the ridge. If infantry being attacked held firm in their square defensive formations, and were not panicked, cavalry on their own could do very little damage to them. The French cavalry attacks were repeatedly repelled by the steadfast infantry squares, the harrying fire of British artillery as the French cavalry recoiled down the slopes to regroup, and the decisive counter-charges of Wellington's light cavalry regiments, the Dutch heavy cavalry brigade, and the remaining effectives of the Household Cavalry. At least one artillery officer disobeyed Wellington's order to seek shelter in the adjacent squares during the charges. Captain Mercer, who commanded 'G' Troop, Royal Horse Artillery, thought the Brunswick troops on either side of him so shaky<sup>[97]</sup> that he kept his battery of six nine-pounders in action against the cavalry throughout, to great effect:

I thus allowed them to advance unmolested until the head of the column might have been about fifty or sixty yards from us, and then gave the word, "Fire!" The effect was terrible. Nearly the whole leading rank fell at once; and the round shot, penetrating the column carried confusion throughout its extent ... the discharge of every gun was followed by a fall of men and horses like that of grass before the mower's scythe.

—Captain Cavalie Mercer, RHA, <sup>[98]</sup>

For reasons that remain unclear, no attempt was made to spike other allied guns while they were in French possession. In line with Wellington's orders, gunners were able to return to their pieces and fire into the French cavalry as they withdrew after each attack. After numerous costly but fruitless attacks on the Mont-Saint-Jean ridge, the French cavalry was spent.<sup>[99]</sup> Their casualties cannot easily be estimated. Senior French cavalry officers, in particular the generals, experienced heavy losses. Four divisional commanders were



"The artillery officers had the range so accurately, that every shot and shell fell into the very centre of their masses." (Original inscription and drawing after George Jones)



A British square puts up dogged resistance against attacking French cavalry.

wounded, nine brigadiers wounded, and one killed – testament to their courage and their habit of leading from the front.<sup>[93]</sup> Illustratively, Houssaye reports that the *Grenadiers à Cheval* numbered 796 of all ranks on 15 June, but just 462 on 19 June, while the Empress Dragoons lost 416 of 816 over the same period.<sup>[100]</sup> Overall Guyot's Guard heavy cavalry division lost 47 percent of its strength.



The *Grenadiers à Cheval*. Napoleon can be seen in the background on a grey horse.<sup>[101]</sup>

Eventually it became obvious, even to Ney, that cavalry alone were achieving little. Belatedly, he organised a combined-arms attack, using Bachelu's division and Tissot's regiment of Foy's division from Reille's II Corps (about 6,500 infantrymen) plus those French cavalry that remained in a fit state to fight. This assault was directed along much the same route as the previous heavy cavalry attacks.<sup>[102]</sup> It was halted by a charge of the Household Brigade cavalry led by Uxbridge. The British cavalry were unable, however, to break the French infantry, and fell back with losses from musketry fire.<sup>[103]</sup> Uxbridge recorded that he tried to lead the Dutch Carabiniers, under Major-General Trip, to

renew the attack and that they refused to follow him. Other members of the British cavalry staff also commented on this occurrence.<sup>[104]</sup> However, there is no support for this incident in Dutch or Belgian sources.<sup>[105]</sup> Meanwhile, Bachelu's and Tissot's men and their cavalry supports were being hard hit by fire from artillery and from Adam's infantry brigade, and they eventually fell back.<sup>[102]</sup> Although the French cavalry caused few direct casualties to Wellington's centre, artillery fire onto his infantry squares caused many. Wellington's cavalry, except for Sir John Vandeleur's and Sir Hussey Vivian's brigades on the far left, had all been committed to the fight, and had taken significant losses. The situation appeared so desperate that the Cumberland Hussars, the only Hanoverian cavalry regiment present, fled the field spreading alarm all the way to Brussels.<sup>[106]</sup>

At approximately the same time as Ney's combined-arms assault on the centre-right of Wellington's line, rallied elements of D'Erlon's I Corps, spearheaded by the 13th *Légère*, renewed the attack on La Haye Sainte, and this time were successful (partly because the defenders' ammunition ran out).<sup>[107]</sup> Ney then moved horse artillery up towards Wellington's centre and began to pulverise the infantry squares at short-range with canister.<sup>[91]</sup> This all but destroyed the 27th (Inniskilling) Regiment, and the 30th and 73rd Regiments suffered such heavy losses that they had to combine to form a viable square.



The storming of La Haye Sainte by Knötel

The banks on the road side, the garden wall, the knoll and sandpit swarmed with skirmishers, who seemed determined to keep down our fire in front; those behind the artificial bank seemed more intent upon destroying the 27th, who at this time, it may literally be said, were lying dead in square; their loss after La Haye Sainte had fallen was awful, without the satisfaction of having scarcely fired a shot, and many of our troops in rear of the ridge were similarly situated.

—Edward Cotton, 7th Hussars,<sup>[108]</sup>

## Arrival of the Prussian IV Corps: Plancenoit

The first Prussian corps to arrive was Bülow's IV Corps. His objective was Plancenoit, which the Prussians intended to use as a springboard into the rear of the French positions. Blücher intended to secure his right upon Frichermont using the Bois de Paris road.<sup>[109]</sup> Blücher and Wellington had been exchanging communications since 10:00 and had agreed to this advance on Frichermont if Wellington's centre was under attack.<sup>[110][111]</sup> General Bülow noted that the way to Plancenoit lay open and that the time was 16:30.<sup>[109]</sup> At about this time, as the French cavalry attack was in full spate, the 15th Brigade IV Corps was sent to



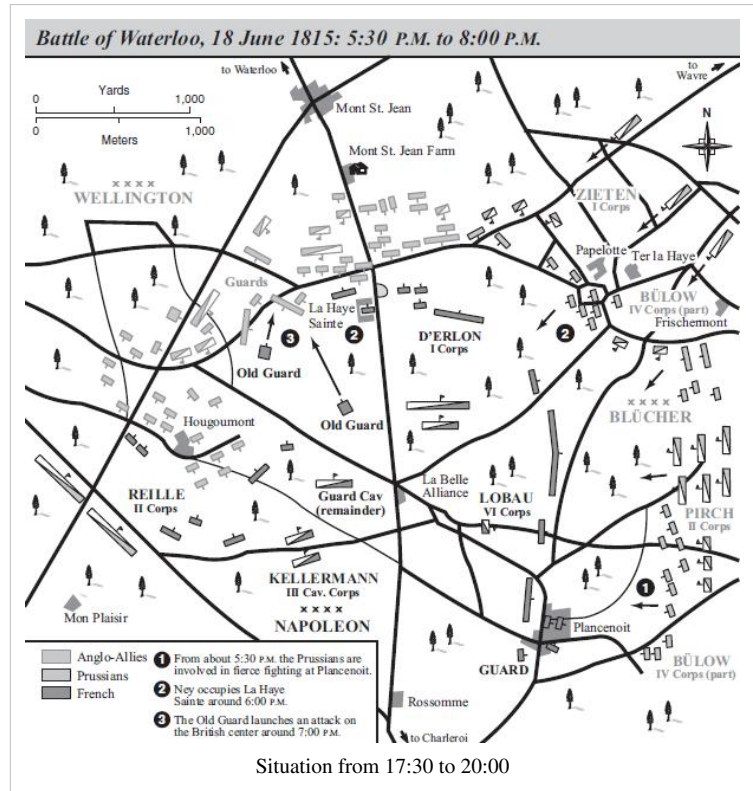
The Prussian attack on Plancenoit painted by Adolph Northern

link up with the Nassauers of Wellington's left flank in the Frichermont-La Haie area with the brigade's horse artillery battery and additional brigade artillery deployed to its left in support.<sup>[112]</sup> Napoleon sent Lobau's corps to intercept the rest of Bülow's IV Corps proceeding to Plancenoit. The 15th Brigade threw Lobau's troops out of Frichermont with a determined bayonet charge, then proceeded up the Frichermont heights, battering French Chasseurs with 12-pounder artillery fire, and pushed on to Plancenoit. This sent Lobau's corps into retreat to the Plancenoit area, and in effect drove Lobau past the rear of the *Armée Du Nord's* right flank and directly threatened its only line of retreat. Hiller's 16th Brigade also pushed forward with six battalions against Plancenoit. Napoleon had dispatched all eight battalions of the Young Guard to reinforce Lobau, who was now seriously pressed. The Young Guard counter-attacked and, after very hard fighting, secured Plancenoit, but were themselves counter-attacked and driven out.<sup>[113]</sup> Napoleon sent two battalions of the Middle/Old Guard into Plancenoit and after ferocious bayonet fighting – they did not deign to fire their muskets – this force recaptured the village.<sup>[113]</sup> The dogged Prussians were still not beaten, and approximately 30,000 troops of IV and II Corps, under Bülow and Pirch, attacked Plancenoit again. It was defended by 20,000 Frenchmen in and around the village.



## Zieten's flank march

Throughout the late afternoon, Zieten's I Corps had been arriving in greater strength in the area just north of La Haie. General Müffling, Prussian liaison to Wellington, rode to meet I Corps. Zieten had by this time brought up his 1st Brigade, but had become concerned at the sight of stragglers and casualties, from the Nassau units on Wellington's left and from the Prussian 15th Brigade. These troops appeared to be withdrawing, and Zieten, fearing that his own troops would be caught up in a general retreat, was starting to move away from Wellington's flank and towards the Prussian main body near Plancenoit. Müffling saw this movement away and persuaded Zieten to support Wellington's left flank. Zieten resumed his march to support Wellington directly, and the arrival of his troops allowed Wellington to reinforce his crumbling centre by moving cavalry from his left.<sup>[114]</sup> I Corps proceeded to attack the French troops before Papelotte and by 19:30, the French position was bent into a rough horseshoe shape. The ends of the line were now based on Hougomont on the left, Plancenoit on the right, and the centre on La Haie.<sup>[90]</sup> Durutte had taken the positions of La Haie and Papelotte in a series of attacks,<sup>[90]</sup> but now retreated behind Smohain without opposing the Prussian 24th Regiment as it retook both. The 24th advanced against the new French position, was repulsed, and returned to the attack supported by Silesian *Schützen* (riflemen) and the F/1st *Landwehr*.<sup>[90]</sup> The French initially fell back before the renewed assault, but now began seriously to contest ground, attempting to regain Smohain and hold on to the ridgeline and the last few houses of Papelotte.<sup>[90]</sup> The 24th Regiment linked up with a Highlander battalion on its far right and along with the 13th *Landwehr* regiment and cavalry support threw the French out of these positions. Further attacks by the 13th *Landwehr* and the 15th Brigade drove the French from Frichermont.<sup>[115]</sup> Durutte's division, finding itself about to be charged by massed squadrons of Zieten's I Corps cavalry reserve, retreated from the battlefield. I Corps then advanced to the Brussels road and the only line of retreat available to the French.



## Attack of the Imperial Guard

Meanwhile, with Wellington's centre exposed by the fall of La Haie Sainte, and the Plancenoit front temporarily stabilised, Napoleon committed his last reserve, the hitherto-undefeated Imperial Guard. This attack, mounted at around 19:30, was intended to break through Wellington's centre and roll up his line away from the Prussians. Although it is one of the most celebrated passages of arms in military history, it is unclear which units actually participated. It appears that it was mounted by five battalions<sup>[116]</sup> of the Middle Guard, and not by the Grenadiers or Chasseurs of the Old Guard.

... I saw four regiments of the middle guard, conducted by the Emperor, arriving. With these troops, he wished to renew the attack, and penetrate the centre of the enemy. He ordered me to lead them on; generals, officers and soldiers all displayed the greatest intrepidity; but this body of troops was too weak to resist, for a long time, the forces opposed to it by the enemy, and it was soon necessary to renounce the hope which this attack had, for a few moments, inspired.

—Marshal M. Ney, <sup>[42]</sup>



Napoleon addresses the Old Guard as it prepares to attack the Anglo-Allied centre at Waterloo.



Grenadier of the Old Guard, by Édouard Detaille

Three Old Guard battalions did move forward and formed the attack's second line, though they remained in reserve and did not directly assault the allied line.<sup>[117]</sup> Marching through a hail of canister and skirmisher fire, the 3,000 or so Middle Guardsmen advanced to the west of La Haye Sainte, and in so doing, separated into three distinct attack forces. One, consisting of two battalions of Grenadiers, defeated Wellington's first line of British, Brunswick and Nassau troops and marched on. Chassé's relatively fresh Dutch division was sent against them and Allied artillery fired into the victorious Grenadiers' flank. This still could not stop the Guard's advance, so Chassé ordered his first brigade to charge the outnumbered French, who faltered and broke.<sup>[9]</sup>

Further to the west, 1,500 British Foot Guards under Maitland were lying down to protect themselves from the French artillery. As two battalions of Chasseurs approached, the second prong of the Imperial Guard's attack, Maitland's guardsmen rose and devastated them with point-blank volleys. The Chasseurs deployed to answer the fire, but began to waver. A bayonet charge by the Foot Guards then broke them. The third prong, a fresh Chasseur battalion, now came up in support. The British guardsmen retired with these Chasseurs in pursuit, but the latter were halted as the 52nd Light Infantry wheeled in line onto their flank and poured a devastating fire into them and then charged.<sup>[9][118]</sup> Under this onslaught they too broke.<sup>[118]</sup>



British 10th Hussars of Vivian's Brigade (red shakos - blue uniforms) attacking mixed French troops, including a square of Guard grenadiers (left, middle distance) in the final stages of the battle.

The last of the Guard retreated headlong. A ripple of panic passed through the French lines as the astounding news spread: "*La Garde recule. Sauve qui peut!*" ("The Guard retreats. Save yourself if you can!"). Wellington now stood up in Copenhagen's stirrups, and waved his hat in the air to signal a general advance. His army rushed forward from the lines and threw themselves upon the retreating French.<sup>[9]</sup>

The surviving Imperial Guard rallied on their three reserve battalions (some sources say four) just south of La Haye Sainte, for a last stand. A charge from Adam's Brigade and the Hanoverian *Landwehr* Osnabrück Battalion, plus Vivian's and Vandeleur's relatively fresh cavalry brigades to their right, threw them into confusion. Those left in semi-cohesive units retreated towards *La Belle Alliance*. It was during this retreat that some of the Guards were invited to surrender, eliciting the famous, if apocryphal,<sup>[119]</sup> retort "*La Garde meurt, elle ne se rend pas!*" ("The Guard dies, it does not surrender!").<sup>[120][121]</sup>

## Capture of Plancenoit

At about the same time, the Prussian 5th, 14th, and 16th Brigades were starting to push through Plancenoit, in the third assault of the day.<sup>[90]</sup>

The church was by now on fire, while its graveyard—the French centre of resistance—had corpses strewn about "as if by a whirlwind".<sup>[90]</sup>

Five Guard battalions were deployed in support of the Young Guard, virtually all of which was now committed to the defence, along with remnants of Lobau's corps.<sup>[90]</sup> The key to the Plancenoit position proved to be the Chantelet woods to the south. Pirch's II Corps had arrived with two brigades and reinforced the attack of IV Corps, advancing through the woods. The 25th Regiment's musketeer battalions threw the 1/2e Grenadiers (Old Guard) out of the Chantelet woods, outflanking Plancenoit and forcing a retreat. The Old Guard

retreated in good order until they met the mass of troops retreating in panic, and became part of that rout.<sup>[90]</sup> The Prussian IV Corps advanced beyond Plancenoit to find masses of French retreating in disorder from British pursuit.<sup>[90]</sup> The Prussians were unable to fire for fear of hitting Wellington's units. This was the fifth and final time that Plancenoit changed hands. French forces not retreating with the Guard



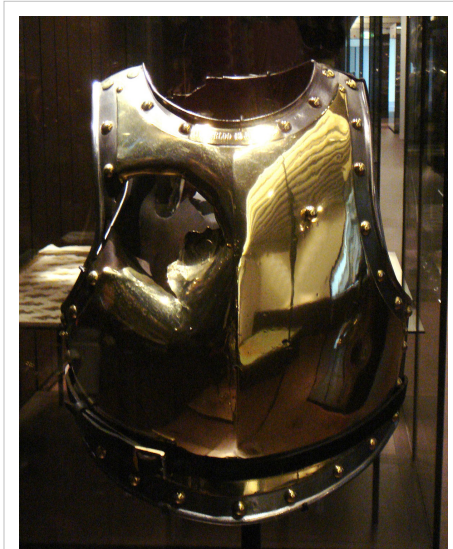
The storming of Plancenoit by Ludwig Elsholtz



were surrounded in their positions and eliminated, neither side asking for nor offering quarter. The French Young Guard Division reported 96 percent casualties, and two-thirds of Lobau's Corps ceased to exist.

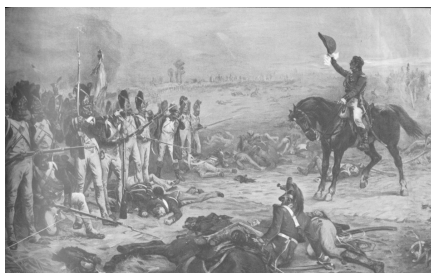
Despite their great courage and stamina, the French Guards fighting in the village began to show signs of wavering. The church was already on fire with columns of red flame coming out of the windows, aisles and doors. In the village itself, still the scene of bitter house-to-house fighting, everything was burning, adding to the confusion. However, once Major von Witzleben's manoeuvre was accomplished and the French Guards saw their flank and rear threatened, they began to withdraw. The Guard Chasseurs under General Pelet formed the rearguard. The remnants of the Guard left in a great rush, leaving large masses of artillery, equipment and ammunition wagons in the wake of their retreat. The evacuation of Plancenoit led to the loss of the position that was to be used to cover the withdrawal of the French Army to Charleroi. The Guard fell back from Plancenoit in the direction of Maison du Roi and Caillou. Unlike other parts of the battlefield, there were no cries of "Sauve qui peut!" here. Instead the cry "Sauvons nos aigles!" ("Let's save our eagles!") could be heard.

—Official History of the 25th Regiment, 4 Corps, <sup>[122]</sup>



*Carabinier-à-Cheval* cuirass holed by a canonball at Waterloo, belonging to Antoine Favreau (Musée de l'Armée).

## Disintegration



Lord Hill invites the last remnants of the French Imperial Guard to surrender, painted by Robert Alexander Hillingford

The French right, left, and centre had all now failed.<sup>[90]</sup> The last cohesive French force consisted of two battalions of the Old Guard stationed around *La Belle Alliance*; the final reserve and personal bodyguard for Napoleon. He hoped to rally the French army behind them,<sup>[123]</sup> but as retreat turned into rout, they too were forced to withdraw, one on either side of *La Belle Alliance*, in square as protection against Coalition cavalry. Until persuaded that the battle was lost and he should leave, Napoleon commanded the square to the left of the inn.<sup>[43][124]</sup> Adam's Brigade charged and forced back this square,<sup>[118][90]</sup> while the Prussians engaged the other. As dusk fell, both squares withdrew in relatively good order, but the French artillery and everything else fell into the hands of the allies. The retreating Guards were surrounded by thousands of fleeing, broken French troops. Coalition cavalry harried the fugitives until about 23:00, with Gneisenau pursuing them as far as Genappe before ordering a halt. There, Napoleon's abandoned carriage was captured, still containing diamonds left in the rush. These became part of King Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia's crown jewels; one Major Keller of the F/15th received the Pour le Mérite with oak leaves for the feat.<sup>[90]</sup> By this time 78 guns and 2,000 prisoners had also been taken, including more generals.<sup>[90]</sup>

There remained to us still four squares of the Old Guard to protect the retreat. These brave grenadiers, the choice of the army, forced successively to retire, yielded ground foot by foot, till, overwhelmed by numbers, they were almost entirely annihilated. From that moment, a retrograde movement was declared, and the army formed nothing but a confused mass. There was not, however, a total rout, nor the cry of *sauve qui peut*, as has been calumniously stated in the bulletin.

—Marshal M. Ney, <sup>[42]</sup>

In the middle of the position occupied by the French army, and exactly upon the height, is a farm (sic), called *La Belle Alliance*. The march of all the Prussian columns was directed towards this farm, which was visible from every side. It was there that Napoleon was during the battle; it was thence that he gave his orders, that he flattered himself with the hopes of victory; and it was there that his ruin was decided. There, too, it was that, by happy chance, Field Marshal Blücher and Lord Wellington met in the dark, and mutually saluted each other as victors.

—General Gneisenau,<sup>[42]</sup>

## Aftermath



"The morning after the battle of Waterloo", by  
John Heaviside Clarke, 1816.

Historian Peter Hofschröder has written that Wellington and Blücher met at Genappe around 22:00, signifying the end of the battle.<sup>[90]</sup> Other sources have recorded that the meeting took place around 21:00 near Napoleon's former headquarters at *La Belle Alliance*.<sup>[125]</sup> Waterloo cost Wellington around 15,000 dead or wounded, and Blücher some 7,000 (810 of which were suffered by just one unit, the 18th Regiment, which served in Bulow's 15th Brigade, had fought at both Fichermont and Plancenoit, and won 33 Iron Crosses).<sup>[126]</sup> Napoleon lost 25,000 dead or wounded, with 8,000 taken prisoner.

June 22. This morning I went to visit the field of battle, which is a little beyond the village of Waterloo, on the plateau of

Mont-Saint-Jean; but on arrival there the sight was too horrible to behold. I felt sick in the stomach and was obliged to return. The multitude of carcasses, the heaps of wounded men with mangled limbs unable to move, and perishing from not having their wounds dressed or from hunger, as the Allies were, of course, obliged to take their surgeons and waggons with them, formed a spectacle I shall never forget. The wounded, both of the Allies and the French, remain in an equally deplorable state.

—Major W. E. Frye *After Waterloo: Reminiscences of European Travel 1815–1819*.<sup>[127]</sup>

At 10:30 on 19 June General Grouchy, still following his orders, defeated General Thielemann at Wavre and withdrew in good order though at the cost of 33,000 French troops that never reached the Waterloo battlefield. Wellington sent his official despatch describing the battle to England on 19 June 1815, and it arrived in London on 21 June 1815 and was published as a *London Gazette Extraordinary* on 22 June.<sup>[128]</sup> Wellington, Blücher and other Coalition forces advanced upon Paris. Napoleon announced his second abdication on 24 June 1815. In the final skirmish of the Napoleonic Wars, Marshal Davout, Napoleon's minister of war, was defeated by Blücher at Issy on 3 July 1815.<sup>[129]</sup> Allegedly, Napoleon tried to escape to North America, but the Royal Navy was blockading French ports to forestall such a move. He finally surrendered to Captain Frederick Maitland of HMS *Bellerophon* on 15 July. There was a campaign against French fortresses that still held out; Longwy capitulated on 13 September 1815, the last to do so. The Treaty of Paris was signed on 20 November 1815. Louis XVIII was restored to the throne of France, and Napoleon was exiled to Saint Helena, where he died in 1821.<sup>[90]</sup>

Royal Highness, – Exposed to the factions which divide my country, and to the enmity of the great Powers of Europe, I have terminated my political career; and I come, like Themistocles, to throw myself upon the hospitality (*m'asseoir sur le foyer*) of the British people. I claim from your Royal Highness the protections of the laws, and throw myself upon the most powerful, the most constant, and the most generous of my enemies.

—Napoleon. (letter of surrender to the Prince Regent; translation),<sup>[42]</sup>

Maitland's 1st Foot Guards, who had defeated the Chasseurs of the Guard, were thought to have defeated the Grenadiers; they were awarded the title of Grenadier Guards in recognition of their feat, and adopted bearskins in the style of the Grenadiers. Britain's Household Cavalry likewise adopted the cuirass in 1821 in recognition of their success against their armoured French counterparts. The effectiveness of the lance was noted by all participants and this weapon subsequently became more widespread throughout Europe; the British converted their first light cavalry regiment to lancers in 1816.



Sir David Wilkie, *The Chelsea Pensioners reading the Waterloo Dispatch*, 1822.

Waterloo was a decisive battle in more than one sense. It definitively ended the series of wars that had convulsed Europe, and involved many other regions of the world, since the French Revolution of the early 1790s. It also ended the political and military career of Napoleon Bonaparte, one of the greatest commanders and statesmen in history. Finally, it ushered in almost half a century of international peace in Europe; no further major conflict occurred until the Crimean War.

The word Waterloo has entered the English vocabulary as a slang term: one who has met with defeat (after a string of successes) is said to have "met his Waterloo".

### A French view of the reasons for Napoleon's defeat

General Baron Jomini, one of the leading military writers on the Napoleonic art of war had a number of very cogent explanations of the reasons behind Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo.<sup>[130]</sup>

In my opinion, four principal causes led to this disaster:

The first, and most influential, was the arrival, skilfully combined, of Blücher, and the false movement that favoured this arrival;<sup>[131]</sup> the second, was the admirable firmness of the British infantry, joined to the sang-froid and aplomb of its chiefs; the third, was the horrible weather, that had softened the ground, and rendered the offensive movements so toilsome, and retarded till one o'clock the attack that should have been made in the morning; the fourth, was the inconceivable formation of the first corps, in masses very much too deep for the first grand attack.<sup>[132]</sup>

### The battlefield today

Some portions of the terrain on the battlefield have been altered from their 1815 appearance. Tourism began the day after the battle, with Captain Mercer noting that on 19 June "a carriage drove on the ground from Brussels, the inmates of which, alighting, proceeded to examine the field".<sup>[98]</sup> In 1820, the Netherlands' King William I ordered the construction of a monument on the spot where it was believed his son, the Prince of Orange, had been wounded. The Lion's Hillock, a giant mound, was constructed here, using 300000 cubic metres (**unknown operator: u'strong'** cu yd) of earth taken from the ridge at the centre of the British line which effectively removed the southern bank of Wellington's sunken road.



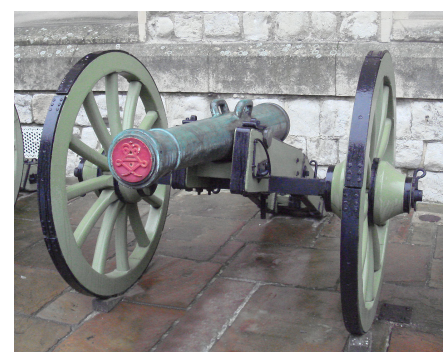
Lion's Mound at Waterloo, erected on the spot where it is believed the Prince of Orange was wounded

Every one is aware that the variously inclined undulations of the plains, where the engagement between Napoleon and Wellington took place, are no longer what they were on June 18, 1815. By taking from this mournful field the wherewithal to make a monument to it, its real relief has been taken away, and history, disconcerted, no longer finds her bearings there. It has been disfigured for the sake of glorifying it. Wellington, when he beheld Waterloo once more, two years later, exclaimed, "They have altered my field of battle!" Where the great pyramid of earth, surmounted by the lion, rises to-day, there was a hillock which descended in an easy slope towards the Nivelles road, but which was almost an escarpment on the side of the highway to Genappe. The elevation of this escarpment can still be measured by the height of the two knolls of the two great sepulchres which enclose the road from Genappe to Brussels: one, the English tomb, is on the left; the other, the German tomb, is on the right. There is no French tomb. The whole of that plain is a sepulchre for France.

—Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*,<sup>[133]</sup>

Other terrain features and notable landmarks on the field have remained virtually unchanged since the battle. These include the rolling farmland to the east of the Brussels-Charleroi Road as well as the buildings at Hougomont, La Haye Sainte, and La Belle Alliance.

Apart from the Lion Mound, there are several more conventional but noteworthy monuments throughout the battlefield. A cluster of monuments at the Brussels-Charleroi and Braine L'Alleud-Ohain crossroads marks the mass graves of British, Dutch, Hanoverian and KGL (King's German Legion) troops. A monument to the French dead, entitled *L'aigle Blessé* ("The Wounded Eagle"), marks the location where it is believed one of the Imperial Guard units formed square during the closing moments of the battle. A monument to the Prussian dead is located in the village of Placenoit on the site where one of their artillery batteries took position. The Duhesme mausoleum is one among the few graves of the fallen. It is located at the side of Saint Martin's Church in Ways, a hamlet in the municipality of Genappe. Seventeen fallen officers are buried in the crypt of a large grave in the Brussels cemetery in Evere.<sup>[134]</sup>



French 6-pounder field gun, cast in 1813 in Metz, captured at the Battle of Waterloo by the Duke of Wellington, now at the Tower of London.





Napoleon last H.Q.  
(Museum-)<sup>[135]</sup>



Monument to KGL (l.) and  
Gordon (r.) and the Lion  
mound



Napoleonic  
Eagle



**Waterloo,**  
Napoléon  
statue erected  
close to the  
*Bivouac de  
l'Empereur*  
hostel



The 8th  
Infantry  
Regiment: In  
this place June  
16, 1815 the  
8th Infantry's  
Durutte  
Division  
successfully  
attacked the  
German 2nd  
Legion of  
Colonel von  
Ompteda.<sup>[136]</sup>



South Portal of the  
*Goumont* or '*Hougoumont*  
farm



Monument to the last fighters of  
the Grand Army (The Wounded  
Eagle)



Victor Hugo  
column,  
portrait.



General Duhesme tomb in Ways.

## Notes

- [1] Wikiquote:Wellington citing *Creevey Papers*, ch. x, p. 236
- [2] Timeline: The Congress of Vienna, the Hundred Days, and Napoleon's Exile on St Helena (<http://dl.lib.brown.edu/napoleon/time7.html>), Center of Digital Initiatives, Brown University Library
- [3] Hamilton-Williams, David p. 59
- [4] Chandler 1966, pp. 1016, 1017, 1093
- [5] Siborne 1990, p. 82.
- [6] Hofschröder 2005, pp. 136–160
- [7] Longford 1971, p. 508
- [8] Longford 1971, p. 527.
- [9] Chesney 1907, p. 136.
- [10] Barbero 2005, p. 75.
- [11] Longford 1971, p. 485
- [12] Longford 1971, p. 484
- [13] Barbero 2005, pp. 75–76.
- [14] An artillery captain, Mercer, thought the Brunswickers "perfect children" (Mercer 1870).
- [15] On 13 June, the commandant at Ath requested powder and cartridges as members of a Hanoverian reserve regiment there had never yet fired a shot (Longford 1971, p. 486).
- [16] Hofschröder 2005, p. 59.
- [17] Hofschröder 2005, pp. 60–62.
- [18] Barbero 2005, pp. 78,79.
- [19] Barbero 2005, p. 80.
- [20] Barbero 2005, p. 149.
- [21] Parry 1900, p. 58.
- [22] Barbero 2005, pp. 141,235.
- [23] Barbero 2005, pp. 83–85.
- [24] Barbero 2005, p. 91.
- [25] Longford 1971, pp. 535,536
- [26] Barbero 2005, p. 141.
- [27] Longford 1971, p. 547
- [28] Roberts 2001, pp. 163–166.
- [29] Barbero 2005, p. 73.
- [30] Roberts 2001, p. xxxii.
- [31] Longford 1971, p. 548
- [32] Bonaparte 1869, pp. 292,293
- [33] Fletcher 1994, p. 20 (<http://books.google.com/books?id=US-QQxjHnn8C&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>)
- [34] Barbero 2005, pp. 95–98.
- [35] Roberts 2005, p. 55
- [36] Wellesley 1815
- [37] Fitchett 2006, Chapter: King-making Waterloo
 

"The hour at which Waterloo began, though there were 150,000 actors in the great tragedy, was long a matter of dispute. The Duke of Wellington puts it at 10:00. General Alava says half-past eleven, Napoleon and Drouet say noon, and Ney 13:00. Lord Hill may be credited with having settled this minute question of fact. He took two watches with him into the fight, one a stop-watch, and he marked with it the sound of the first shot fired, and this evidence is now accepted as proving that the first flash of red flame which marked the opening of the world-shaking tragedy of Waterloo took place at exactly ten minutes to twelve."
- [38] That is, the 1st battalion of the 2nd Regiment. Among Prussian regiments, "F/12th" denoted the fusilier battalion of the 12th Regiment.
- [39] Barbero 2005, pp. 113–114.
- [40] Napoleonic: The Great Gate of Hougoumont (<http://www.militaryartcompany.com/napoleonic.htm>) (Image). *MilitaryCompany.com*. Retrieved on 14 September 2007.
- [41] Barbero 2005, p. 298.
 

Seeing the flames, Wellington sent a note to the house's commander stating that he must hold his position whatever the cost,
- [42] Booth 1815, p. 10
- [43] Creasy 1877, Chapter XV (<http://www.standin.se/fifteen15a.htm>)
- [44] See, for example, Longford 1971, pp. 552–554
- [45] Barbero 2005, pp. 305,306.
- [46] Roberts 2005, p. 57
- [47] Fitchett 2006, Chapter: King-making Waterloo, "Lord Hill may be credited with having settled this minute question of fact. He took two watches with him into the fight, one a stop-watch, and he marked with it the sound of the first shot fired ... At ten minutes to twelve the first



- heavy gun rang sullenly from the French ridge"
- [48] Barbero 2005, p. 131.
- [49] Barbero 2005, p. 130.
- [50] Barbero 2005, p. 136.
- [51] Barbero 2005, p. 145.
- [52] Barbero 2005, p. 165.
- [53] Websites of current Dutch Historians: Erwin van Muilwijk: Tiscali.nl (<http://home.tiscali.nl/erwinmuilwijk/index.htm>), and Marco Bijl: 8militia.net (<http://www.8militia.net>) These historians are preparing new publications about the role of the Dutch army. And this time it will only be based on eye witness accounts and official battle reports. Drafts can be found at their sites. **(English)**
- [54] Eenens, A. M (1879) "Dissertation sur la participation des troupes des Pays-Bas a la campagne de 1815 en Belgique", in: Soci  t   royale des beaux arts et de litt  rature de Gand, Messenger des Sciences Historiques. Vanderhaegen, Gand, 1879. French language. pp. 14–30, 131–198
- [55] De Jongh, W.A.: Veldtocht van den Jare 1815, Historisch verhaal; in De Nieuwe Militaire Spectator (Nijmegen 1866). This is the original account of Colonel de Jongh, commander of the Dutch 8th Militia. It can be downloaded at the site of Mr Marco Bijl above. It is one of the most important printed eye witness accounts we have in the Dutch literature. Dutch language. pp. 13–27.
- [56] L  ben Sels, Ernst van Bijdragen tot de krijgsgeschiedenis van Napoleon Bonaparte / door E. van L  ben Sels Part 4; Veldtogten van 1814 in Frankrijk, en van 1815 in de Nederlanden (Battles). 1842. 's-Gravenhage : de Erven Doorman. Dutch language. pp. 601–682.
- [57] Allebrandi, Sebastian. Herinneringen uit mijne tienjarige militaire loopbaan. Allebrandi was a soldier in the Dutch 7th militia and thus his account is important. 1835. Amsterdam : Van Kesteren. Dutch language. pp. 21–30.
- [58] Bas, F de, and J. De T'Serclaes de Wommersom ; La campagne de 1815 aux Pays-Bas d'apr  s les rapports officiels n  erlandais / Parts: I: Quatre-Bras. II: Waterloo. III: Annexes et notes. [IV]: suppl  ment: [14] cartes et plans, Jaar: 1908–1909, Bruxelles This is the document composed by the 'Netherlands Institute for Military History (NIMH)' and is thus the most complete and reliable document ever made thus far. It also contains Van Zuylen's 'History of the 2nd division'. Van Zuylen was the chief of staff of the 2nd division and located right behind the van Bijlandt brigade during the whole day. He wrote a 32 pages report, right after the battle. This report forms the bases of most of the other literature mentioned here. French language. Part 3, pp. 289–352. Google Books (<http://books.google.com/books?id=V5wLAQAIAAJ&pg=PA286&dq=De+Bas+++Zuylen&lr=&cd=16#v=onepage&q=De+Bas+Zuylen&f=false>)
- [59] Belgians at Waterloo: With Translations of the Reports of the Dutch and Belgian Commanders" Demetrius C. Boulger, London 1901. S.H. De only English translation of the reports of Van Zuylen and others.
- [60] Knoop, Willem Jan. Beschouwingen over Siborne's Geschiedenis van den oorlog van 1815 in Frankrijk en de Nederlanden" en wederlegging van de in dat werk voorkomende beschuldigingen tegen het Nederlandsche leger. Breda 1846; 2nd printing 1847. Dutch language. pp. 100–192.;
- [61] Craan, W. B. (Transl. by A. Gore) (1817) An historical account of the battle of Waterloo. **(English)** p. 30.
- [62] See above: Websites and Eenens, L  ben Sels, Allebrandi, de Bas, and Boulger.
- [63] See above: de Bas, and Boulger).
- [64] See above: Eenens, Allebrandi, de Bas, and Boulger).
- [65] Pawly, Ronald. Wellington's Belgian Allies. Men at Arms nr 98. 1815 Osprey 2001. This book, although small, gives a good picture of the Dutch and Belgian troops at the battles. The 'Netherlands Institute for Military History (NIMH)' contributed to the book and it thus can be seen as the official Dutch history. **(English)** pp. 37–43.
- [66] Glover G., Letters from the Battle of Waterloo: the unpublished correspondence by Allied officers from the Siborne papers. And "the Waterloo letters". 2004 London: Greenhill. **(English)** The following letters are used: the accounts of General Kempt, Calvert of the 32nd infantry, Cruikshank of the 79th , Winchester & Hope of the 92nd, Evans (Ponsonby Cavalry brigade) and Clark Kennedy of the Royal Dragoons. These are the only letters that actually state some details about the Dutch and Belgian troops.
- [67] See above: Knoop, mentioned websites and Eenens, Craan, De Jongh, L  ben Sels, Allebrandi, de Bas, and Boulger).
- [68] Quotes of Lieutenant Hope of 92nd Gordon Highlanders (see letters from the Battle of Waterloo above) and Lieutenant Henri Ch  tien Scheltens of Dutch 7th Line Battalion (See de Bas and Boulger).
- [69] Barbero 2005, pp. 85–187.
- [70] Barbero 2005, p. 188. The Royal Horse Guards (2 squadrons) were in reserve for the Household Brigade (9 or 10 squadrons strong) but the Union Brigade (9 squadrons) had no reserve. Siborne HT, Letter 5, and Glover, Letter 16. The total may have been 18 squadrons as there is an uncertainty in the sources as to whether the King's Dragoon Guards fielded three or four squadrons. Uxbridge implies 4 squadrons in Letter 5 in H T Siborne, however, Capt. Naylor of the King's implies 3 when he states he commanded the centre squadron of the regiment, reported in Letter 21.
- [71] Glover, Letter 16, Frederick Stovin (ADC to Sir Thomas Picton)
- [72] Siborne 1993, Letter 5.
- [73] Barbero 2005, p. 426, note 18  
An episode famously used later by Victor Hugo in *Les Mis  rables*.
- [74] Siborne 1990, pp. 410,411.
- [75] Houssaye 1900, p. 182
- [76] This anecdote can be found in *The Waterloo Papers* by E. Bruce Low contained in *With Napoleon at Waterloo*, MacBride, M., (editor), London 1911. The tale was related, in old age, by a Sgt-Major Dickinson of the Greys, reputedly the last survivor of the charge.
- [77] Barbero 2005, pp. 198–204.

[78] Barbero 2005, p. 211.

[79] Siborne 1990, pp. 425–426.

[80] Adkin 2001, p. 217 (for initial strengths)

[81] Smith 1998, p. 544 (for losses)

Losses are ultimately from the official returns taken the day after the battle: Household Brigade, initial strength 1,319, killed – 95, wounded – 248, missing – 250, totals – 593, horses lost – 672. Union Brigade, initial strength 1,332, killed – 264, wounded – 310, missing – 38, totals – 612, horses lost – 631.

[82] This view appears to have arisen from a comment by Captain Clark-Kennedy of the 1st Dragoons 'Royals', in a letter in H. T. Siborne's book, he makes an estimate of around 900 men actually in line within the Union Brigade before its first charge. He does not, however, explain how his estimate was arrived at. The shortfall of 432 men (the equivalent of a whole regiment) from the paper strength of the brigade is large. By comparison the 15th Hussars, at approximately the same paper strength as each of the Union Brigade regiments, had about 60 men detached or in the rear at the start of the battle (Glover, Gareth. *From Corunna to Waterloo: the Letters and Journals of Two Napoleonic Hussars, 1801–1816*. London: Greenhill Books, 2007). By extrapolation a figure of around 180 men, rather than more than 400, from the brigade could be expected to be detached.

[83] Barbero 2005, pp. 219–223.

[84] Siborne 1990, pp. 329,349 (composition of brigades), pp. 422–424 (actions of brigades)

Note: William Siborne was in possession of a number of eyewitness accounts from generals, such as Uxbridge, down to cavalry cornets and infantry ensigns. This makes his history particularly useful (though only from the British and KGL perspective); some of these eyewitness letters were later published by his son, a British Major General (H.T. Siborne)). Parts of Siborne's account was, and is, highly controversial. The very negative light shed on the conduct of the Dutch-Belgian troops during the battle by Siborne, which it should be said was a reasonably accurate reflection the opinions of his British informants, prompted a semi-official rebuttal by Dutch historian captain Willem Jan Knoop in his *"Beschouwingen over Siborne's Geschiedenis van den oorlog van 1815 in Frankrijk en de Nederlanden" en wederlegging van de in dat werk voorkomende beschuldigingen tegen het Nederlandsche leger*. Breda 1846; 2nd printing 1847. Knoop based his rebuttal on the official Dutch after-battle reports, drawn up within days of the battle, not on twenty-year-old recollections of veterans, like Siborne. Siborne rejected the rebuttal.

[85] Siborne 1993, Letters: 18, 26, 104.

[86] Siborne 1993, p. 38.

[87] Siborne 1990, p. 463.

[88] Siborne 1993, Letters 9, 18, 36

[89] In a cavalry unit an "effective" was an unwounded trooper mounted on a sound horse. The military term "effective" describes a soldier, piece of equipment (e.g. a tank or aircraft) or military unit capable of fighting or carrying out its intended purpose.

[90] Hofschröder 1999, p. 139

[91] Siborne 1990, p. 439.

[92] Adkin 2001, p. 356

[93] Adkin 2001, p. 359.

[94] Gronow 1862

[95] Weller 1992, pp. 211,212

[96] Adkin 2001, pp. 252,361.

[97] This qualification may have been self-serving on Mercer's part. Wellington himself sought refuge in the "shaky" Brunswick squares at the time and observed what he interpreted as acts of cowardice by British artillerymen, who "...ran off the field entirely, taking with them limbers, ammunition, and everything..." as he wrote in a letter of 21 December 1815 to the Master-General of the Ordnance, Lord Mulgrave. The incident even justified the denial of pensions to members of the Artillery Corps in his view. So, where Mercer claimed heroism, Wellington saw the opposite. See for the full text of Wellington's letter, and an attempted rebuttal Duncan, F. (1879) *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery*, Appendix A, pp. 444–464 Google Books. (<http://books.google.com/books?id=8qDrGCIlogC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Wellington+captain+Sandham+Mulgrave&lr=#PPA444,M1>) The letter was originally published in *WSD*, vol. XIV (1858 ed.), pp. 618–620

[98] Mercer 1870

[99] Weller 1992, p. 114

[100] Houssaye 1900, p. 522

[101] A number of different mounts could have been ridden by Napoleon at Waterloo: Ali, Crebère, Désirée, Jaffa, Marie and Tauris (Summerville 2007, p. 315 ([http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=q\\_cXSrh0C\\_IC&pg=PA315&dq=horse+DÃ©sirÃ©e+waterloo#PPA315,M1](http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=q_cXSrh0C_IC&pg=PA315&dq=horse+DÃ©sirÃ©e+waterloo#PPA315,M1))) Lozier states it was Désirée (Lozier).

[102] Adkin 2001, p. 361.

[103] Siborne 1993, pp. 14,38–39.

[104] Siborne 1993, pp.14–15 and letters 6,7 and 9.

[105] On the contrary, many contradicted this British account vehemently. See e.g. Eenens, A.M (1879) "Dissertation sur la participation des troupes des Pays-Bas a la campagne de 1815 en Belgique", in: Societé royale des beaux arts et de littérature de Gand, *Messenger des Sciences Historiques*, pp. 131–198. Google Books; (<http://books.google.com/books?id=ssdJAAAAMAAJ&pg=PT23&dq=Eenens+Dissertation&lr=#PPA135,M1>) Knoop, W.J., *"Beschouwingen over Siborne's Geschiedenis van den oorlog van 1815 in Frankrijk en de Nederlanden" en*

- wederlegging van de in dat werk voorkomende beschuldigingen tegen het Nederlandsche leger. Breda 1846; 2nd printing 1847; Craan, W .B. (transl. by A. Gore) (1817) *An historical account of the battle of Waterloo*, p. 30 Google Books ([http://books.google.com/books?id=jEsBAAAAQAAJ&pg=RA1-PA41&dq=Van+der+Smissen"+general&lr=#PRA1-PA30,M1](http://books.google.com/books?id=jEsBAAAAQAAJ&pg=RA1-PA41&dq=Van+der+Smissen)), written in 1816 on the basis of eyewitness accounts does not mention the incident.
- [106] Siborne 1990, p. 465  
The commander of this regiment, who was later court-martialled and cashiered, claimed that as his troopers (all well-to-do young Hanoverians) owned their own horses he could not order them to remain on the field. Following the battle the regiment was broken up and the troopers assigned duties they, no-doubt, considered ignominious. Four were posted to Captain Mercer's horse artillery troop, where he found them "amazingly snappish and sulky with everyone" (see: Mercer 1870).
- [107] Beamish 1995, p. 367.
- [108] Cotton 1849, pp. 106,107
- [109] Hofschröder 1999, p. 116
- [110] Hofschröder 1999, p. 95
- [111] Chesney 1907, p. 165
- [112] Hofschröder 1999, p. 117
- [113] Hofschröder 1999, p. 122
- [114] Hofschröder 1999, p. 125
- [115] Hofschröder 1999, p. 141.
- [116] Barbero 2005. notes that two Chasseur battalions were merged into one on the day of the battle, so while five Guard formations went forward, they may have comprised six battalions.
- [117] Adkin 2001, p. 391.  
The attacking battalions were 1st/3rd and 4th Grenadiers and 1st/3rd, 2nd/3rd and 4th Chasseurs of the Middle Guard; those remaining in reserve were the 2nd/2nd Grenadiers, 2nd/1st and 2nd/2nd Chasseurs of the Old Guard.
- [118] Parry 1900, p. 70
- [119] "'The Guard dies, but it does not surrender!' is another of these fictitious historical sayings. General Cambronne, to whom it is attributed, never uttered. Victor Hugo, in *Les Misérables*, has restored the true text. It is composed of a single word [*Merde!*]" (David Masson, *et al. Macmillan's magazine*, Volume 19, Macmillan and Co., 1869, p. 164 (<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=xt76rS3-RbwC&q=fictitious+The+Guard+dies,+it+does+not+surrender&dq=fictitious+The+Guard+dies,+it+does+not+surrender>))
- [120] White
- [121] The reply is commonly attributed to General Pierre Cambronne originating from an attribution by the journalist Balison de Rougemont in *Journal General* published on 24 June 1815 (Shapiro (2006) p. 128 (<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=w5-GR-qtgXsC&pg=PA128&dq=Rougemont+Waterloo>)), although Cambronne claimed he replied "*Merde!*" (Boller p. 12 (<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=NCOEYJ0q-DUC&printsec=frontcover#PPA12,M1>)). However according to letters in *The Times* in June 1932, Cambronne was already a prisoner of Colonel Hugh Halkett, so the retort, if ever given, or in whatever form it took, may have come from General Michel instead. (White, and Parry 1900, p. p. 70)
- [122] Hofschröder 1999, p. 145
- [123] Kincaid
- [124] Comte d'Erlon 1815
- [125] Regimental history of the Rifles ([http://www2.army.mod.uk/infantry/regts/the\\_rifles/history\\_traditions/](http://www2.army.mod.uk/infantry/regts/the_rifles/history_traditions/)): Battle of Waterloo ([http://www2.army.mod.uk/infantry/regts/the\\_rifles/history\\_traditions/origins\\_campaigns/the\\_battle\\_of\\_waterloo.htm](http://www2.army.mod.uk/infantry/regts/the_rifles/history_traditions/origins_campaigns/the_battle_of_waterloo.htm)) on an old website of the British Ministry of Defence. See the link near the bottom called "here" (ppt) ([http://www2.army.mod.uk/linkedfiles/lightinfantry/regimental\\_downloads/the\\_battle\\_of\\_waterloo.ppt](http://www2.army.mod.uk/linkedfiles/lightinfantry/regimental_downloads/the_battle_of_waterloo.ppt)) Slide 39
- [126] *Prussian Reserve Infantry 1813–1815*, Robert Mantle, Napoleonic Association, 1977 Napoleon-series.org ([http://www.napoleon-series.org/military/organization/c\\_resinf2.html](http://www.napoleon-series.org/military/organization/c_resinf2.html))
- [127] Frye 2004
- [128] *London Gazette*: no. 17028. p. 1213 (<http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/17028/pages/1213>). 22 June 1815. Retrieved 19 May 2010.
- [129] Nuttall Encyclopaedia: Issy (<http://www.fromoldbooks.org/Wood-NuttallEncyclopaedia/i/issy.html>)
- [130] Jomini was Swiss by birth, but was an officer, eventually a general, in the French army and had served on the staff of Marshal Ney.
- [131] This "false movement" was the detachment of Grouchy's force in pursuit of the Prussians – Napoleon had overestimated the extent of his victory at Ligny and underestimated the resilience of the Prussians. He also seems to have discounted the presence of Bülow's substantial corps, which had not been in action at Ligny. Had Napoleon retained Grouchy's 30,000 men as a guard for his right flank it is likely that these troops could have held off the Prussians and allowed the rest of Napoleon's army to attack Wellington's army unmolested.
- [132] Jomini 1864, pp. 223,224
- [133] Hugo 1862, Chapter VII: Napoleon in a Good Humor
- [134] C Van Hoorebeeke *Blackman, John-Lucie : pourquoi sa tombe est-elle à Hougomont?* Bulletin de l'Association belge napoléonienne, n° 118, septembre – octobre 2007, pages 6 à 21)
- [135] with sight on the Lion Mound left on the horizon line.
- [136] close to the KGL monument

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## Maps

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- Map of the battlefield on modern Google map and satellite photographs showing main locations of the battlefield (<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=113384660960350206735.00000111ccfa54c3759d7&z=12&om=1>)
- 1816 Map of the battlefield with initial dispositions (<http://nla.gov.au/nla.map-rm1383>) by Willem Benjamin Craan
- Interactive Google Map of the Battle of Waterloo (<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=202977755949863934429.00047c129818db15cbe12&t=h&z=9>) Zoom in on the actual locations of the Battle of Waterloo in terrain and satellite modes, observe the troop movements and follow a timeline legend that puts it all in the right sequence.
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### Uniforms


- French, Prussian and Anglo-allies uniforms during the Battle of Waterloo : Mont-Saint-Jean (<http://centjours.mont-saint-jean.com/unites.php>) (FR)

## External links

- *Booknotes* interview with Andrew Roberts on *Napoleon & Wellington: The Battle of Waterloo and the Great Commanders Who Fought It*, January 12, 2003. (<http://www.booknotes.org/Watch/174208-1/Andrew+Roberts.aspx>)

# Battle of Gettysburg

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The **Battle of Gettysburg** (local  <sup>i</sup>/ˈɡɛtʃsbɜːrɡ/<sup>[1]</sup>, with an /s/ sound)<sup>[1]</sup> was fought July 1–3, 1863, in and around the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The battle with the largest number of casualties in the American Civil War,<sup>[2]</sup> it is often described as the war's turning point.<sup>[3]</sup> Union Maj. Gen. George Gordon Meade's Army of the Potomac defeated attacks by Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, ending Lee's invasion of the North.

After his success at Chancellorsville in Virginia in May 1863, Lee led his army through the Shenandoah Valley to begin his second invasion of the North—the Gettysburg Campaign. With his army in high spirits, Lee intended to shift the focus of the summer campaign from war-ravaged northern Virginia and hoped to influence Northern politicians to give up their prosecution of the war by penetrating as far as Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, or even Philadelphia. Prodded by President Abraham Lincoln, Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker moved his army in pursuit, but was relieved just three days before the battle and replaced by Meade.

Elements of the two armies initially collided at Gettysburg on July 1, 1863, as Lee urgently concentrated his forces there, his objective being to engage the Union army and destroy it. Low ridges to the northwest of town were defended initially by a Union cavalry division under Brig. Gen. John Buford, and soon reinforced with two corps of Union infantry. However, two large Confederate corps assaulted them from the northwest and north, collapsing the hastily developed Union lines, sending the defenders retreating through the streets of town to the hills just to the south.

On the second day of battle, most of both armies had assembled. The Union line was laid out in a defensive formation resembling a fishhook. In the late afternoon of July 2, Lee launched a heavy assault on the Union left flank, and fierce fighting raged at Little Round Top, the Wheatfield, Devil's Den, and the Peach Orchard. On the Union right, demonstrations escalated into full-scale assaults on Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill. All across the battlefield, despite significant losses, the Union defenders held their lines.

On the third day of battle, July 3, fighting resumed on Culp's Hill, and cavalry battles raged to the east and south, but the main event was a dramatic infantry assault by 12,500 Confederates against the center of the Union line on Cemetery Ridge, known as Pickett's Charge. The charge was repulsed by Union rifle and artillery fire, at great losses to the Confederate army. Lee led his army on a torturous retreat back to Virginia. Between 46,000 and 51,000 soldiers from both armies were casualties in the three-day battle. That November, President Lincoln used the dedication ceremony for the Gettysburg National Cemetery to honor the fallen Union soldiers and redefine the purpose of the war in his historic Gettysburg Address.

## Background and movement to battle

Further information: Gettysburg Campaign, Gettysburg Battlefield, Confederate order of battle, and Union order of battle

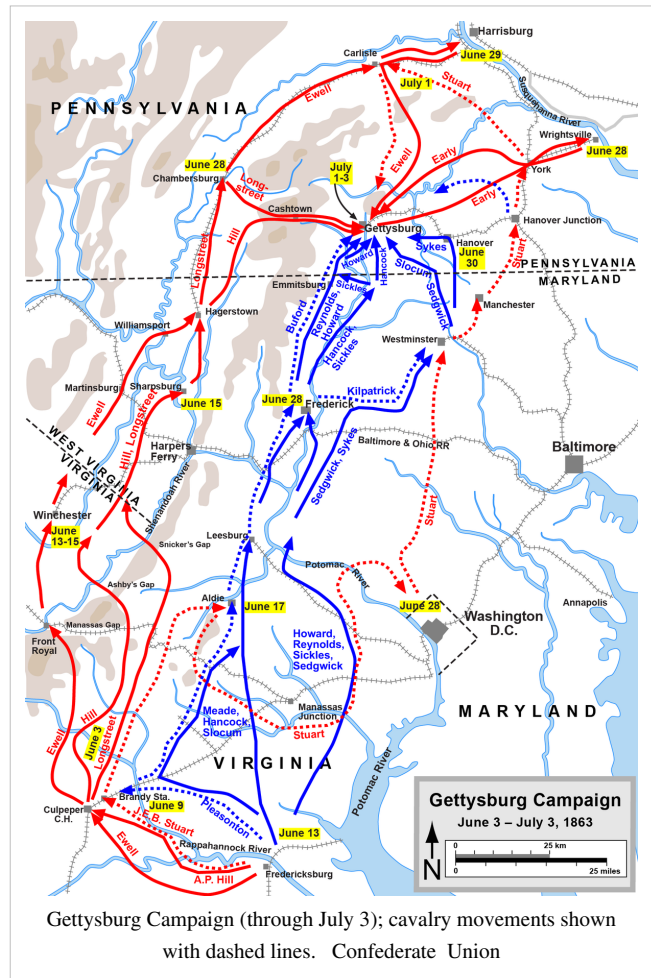
Shortly after the Army of Northern Virginia won a major victory over the Army of the Potomac at the Battle of Chancellorsville (April 30 – May 6, 1863), Robert E. Lee decided upon a second invasion of the North (the first was the unsuccessful Maryland Campaign of September 1862, which ended in the bloody Battle of Antietam). Such a move would upset Federal plans for the summer campaigning season and possibly reduce the pressure on the besieged Confederate garrison at Vicksburg. The invasion would allow the Confederates to live off the bounty of the rich Northern farms while giving war-ravaged Virginia a much-needed rest. In addition, Lee's 72,000-man army<sup>[1]</sup> could threaten Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, and possibly strengthen the growing peace movement in the North.<sup>[4]</sup>

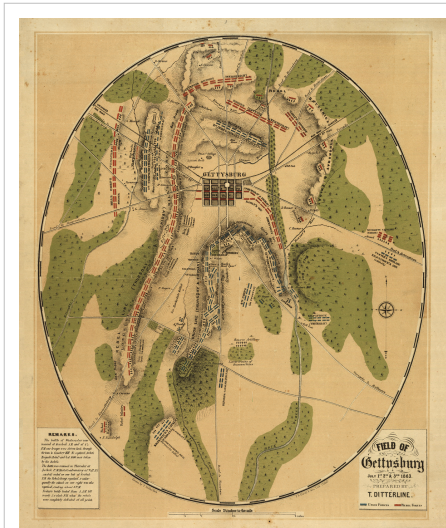
Thus, on June 3, Lee's army began to shift northward from Fredericksburg, Virginia. To attain more efficiency in his command, Lee had reorganized his two large corps into three new corps. Lt. Gen. James Longstreet retained command of his First Corps. The old corps of deceased Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson was divided in two, with the Second Corps going to Lt. Gen. Richard S. Ewell and the new Third Corps to Lt. Gen. A.P. Hill. The Cavalry Division was commanded by Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart.<sup>[5]</sup>

The Union Army of the Potomac, under Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker, consisted of seven infantry corps, a cavalry corps, and an Artillery Reserve, for a combined strength of about 94,000 men.<sup>[1]</sup> However, President Lincoln replaced Hooker with Maj. Gen. George Gordon Meade, a Pennsylvanian, because of Hooker's defeat at Chancellorsville and his timid response to Lee's second invasion north of the Potomac River.

The first major action of the campaign took place on June 9 between cavalry forces at Brandy Station, near Culpeper, Virginia. The 9,500 Confederate cavalrymen under Stuart were surprised by Maj. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton's combined arms force of two cavalry divisions (8,000 troopers) and 3,000 infantry, but Stuart eventually repulsed the Union attack. The inconclusive battle, the largest predominantly cavalry engagement of the war, proved for the first time that the Union horse soldier was equal to his Southern counterpart.<sup>[6]</sup>

By mid-June, the Army of Northern Virginia was poised to cross the Potomac River and enter Maryland. After defeating the Federal garrisons at Winchester and Martinsburg, Ewell's Second Corps began crossing the river on June 15. Hill's and Longstreet's corps followed on June 24 and June 25. Hooker's army pursued, keeping between the U.S. capital and Lee's army. The Federals crossed the Potomac from June 25 to June 27.<sup>[7]</sup>





This 1863 oval-shaped map depicts Gettysburg Battlefield during July 1–3, 1863, showing troop and artillery positions and movements, relief hachures, drainage, roads, railroads, and houses with the names of residents at the time of the Battle of Gettysburg.

Lee gave strict orders for his army to minimize any negative impacts on the civilian population.<sup>[8]</sup> Food, horses, and other supplies were generally not seized outright, although quartermasters reimbursing Northern farmers and merchants with Confederate money were not well received. Various towns, most notably York, Pennsylvania, were required to pay indemnities in lieu of supplies, under threat of destruction. During the invasion, the Confederates seized some 40 northern African Americans, a few of whom were escaped fugitive slaves but most were freemen. They were sent south into slavery under guard.<sup>[9]</sup>

On June 26, elements of Maj. Gen. Jubal Early's division of Ewell's Corps occupied the town of Gettysburg after chasing off newly raised Pennsylvania militia in a series of minor skirmishes. Early laid the borough under tribute but did not collect any significant supplies. Soldiers burned several railroad cars and a covered bridge, and destroyed nearby rails and telegraph lines. The following morning, Early departed for adjacent York County.<sup>[10]</sup>

Meanwhile, in a controversial move, Lee allowed Jeb Stuart to take a portion of the army's cavalry and ride around the east flank of the

Union army. Lee's orders gave Stuart much latitude, and both generals share the blame for the long absence of Stuart's cavalry, as well as for the failure to assign a more active role to the cavalry left with the army. Stuart and his three best brigades were absent from the army during the crucial phase of the approach to Gettysburg and the first two days of battle. By June 29, Lee's army was strung out in an arc from Chambersburg (28 miles (45 km) northwest of Gettysburg) to Carlisle (30 miles (48 km) north of Gettysburg) to near Harrisburg and Wrightsville on the Susquehanna River.<sup>[11]</sup>

In a dispute over the use of the forces defending the Harpers Ferry garrison, Hooker offered his resignation, and Abraham Lincoln and General-in-Chief Henry W. Halleck, who were looking for an excuse to get rid of him, immediately accepted. They replaced Hooker early on the morning of June 28 with Maj. Gen. George Gordon Meade, then commander of the V Corps.<sup>[12]</sup>

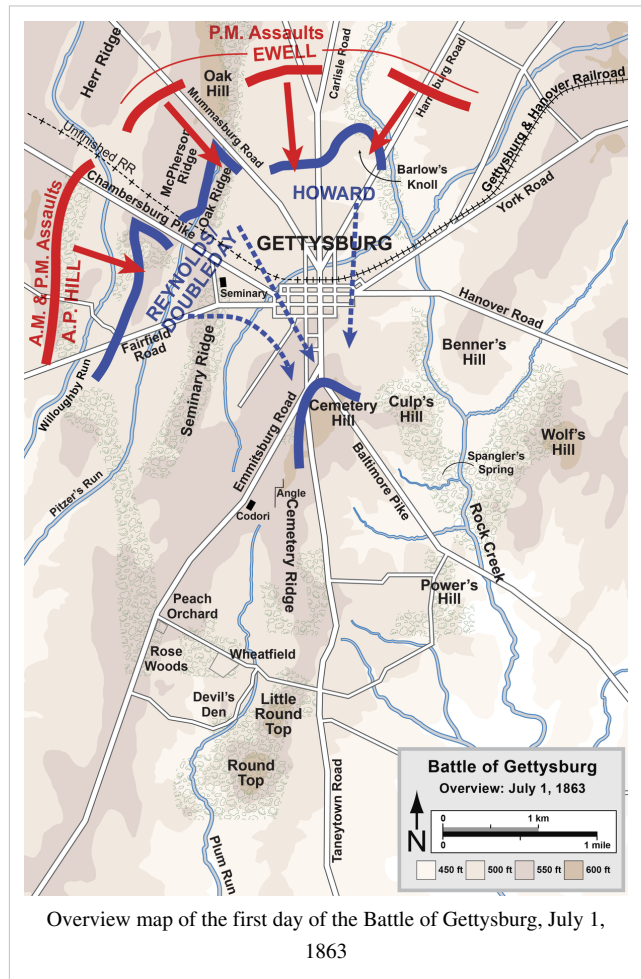
On June 29, when Lee learned that the Army of the Potomac had crossed the Potomac River, he ordered a concentration of his forces around Cashtown, located at the eastern base of South Mountain and eight miles (13 km) west of Gettysburg.<sup>[13]</sup> On June 30, while part of Hill's Corps was in Cashtown, one of Hill's brigades, North Carolinians under Brig. Gen. J. Johnston Pettigrew, ventured toward Gettysburg. In his memoirs, Maj. Gen. Henry Heth, Pettigrew's division commander, claimed that he sent Pettigrew to search for supplies in town—especially shoes.<sup>[14]</sup>

When Pettigrew's troops approached Gettysburg on June 30, they noticed Union cavalry under Brig. Gen. John Buford arriving south of town, and Pettigrew returned to Cashtown without engaging them. When Pettigrew told Hill and Heth what he had seen, neither general believed that there was a substantial Federal force in or near the town, suspecting that it had been only Pennsylvania militia. Despite General Lee's order to avoid a general engagement until his entire army was concentrated, Hill decided to mount a significant reconnaissance in force the following morning to determine the size and strength of the enemy force in his front. Around 5 a.m. on Wednesday, July 1, two brigades of Heth's division advanced to Gettysburg.<sup>[15]</sup>

## First day of battle

Further information: Battle of Gettysburg, First Day

Anticipating that the Confederates would march on Gettysburg from the west on the morning of July 1, Buford laid out his defenses on three ridges west of the town: Herr Ridge, McPherson Ridge, and Seminary Ridge. These were appropriate terrain for a delaying action by his small cavalry division against superior Confederate infantry forces, meant to buy time awaiting the arrival of Union infantrymen who could occupy the strong defensive positions south of town at Cemetery Hill, Cemetery Ridge, and Culp's Hill. Buford understood that if the Confederates could gain control of these heights, Meade's army would have difficulty dislodging them.<sup>[16]</sup>



Heth's division advanced with two brigades forward, commanded by Brig. Gens. James J. Archer and Joseph R. Davis. They proceeded easterly in columns along the Chambersburg Pike. Three miles (5 km) west of town, about 7:30 a.m. on July 1, the two brigades met light resistance from vedettes of Union cavalry, and deployed into line. According to lore, the Union soldier to fire the first shot of the battle was Lt. Marcellus Jones.<sup>[17]</sup> In 1886 Lt. Jones returned to Gettysburg to mark the spot where he fired the first shot with a monument.<sup>[18]</sup> Eventually, Heth's men reached dismounted troopers of Col. William Gamble's cavalry brigade, who raised determined resistance and delaying tactics from behind fence posts with fire from their breechloading carbines.<sup>[19]</sup> Still, by 10:20 a.m., the Confederates had pushed the Union cavalymen east to McPherson Ridge, when the vanguard of the I Corps (Maj. Gen. John F. Reynolds) finally arrived.<sup>[20]</sup>

North of the pike, Davis gained a temporary success against Brig. Gen. Lysander Cutler's brigade but was repulsed with heavy losses in an action around an unfinished railroad bed cut in the ridge. South of the pike, Archer's brigade assaulted through Herbst (also known as McPherson's) Woods. The Federal Iron Brigade under Brig. Gen. Solomon Meredith enjoyed initial success against Archer, capturing several hundred men, including Archer himself.<sup>[21]</sup>

General Reynolds was shot and killed early in the fighting while directing troop and artillery placements just to the east of the woods. Shelby Foote wrote that the Union cause lost a man considered by many to be "the best general in



the army."<sup>[22]</sup> Maj. Gen. Abner Doubleday assumed command. Fighting in the Chambersburg Pike area lasted until about 12:30 p.m. It resumed around 2:30 p.m., when Heth's entire division engaged, adding the brigades of Pettigrew and Col. John M. Brockenbrough.<sup>[23]</sup>

As Pettigrew's North Carolina Brigade came on line, they flanked the 19th Indiana and drove the Iron Brigade back. The 26th North Carolina (the largest regiment in the army with 839 men) lost heavily, leaving the first day's fight with around 212 men. By the end of the three-day battle, they had about 152 men standing, the highest casualty percentage for one battle of any regiment, North or South.<sup>[24]</sup> Slowly the Iron Brigade was pushed out of the woods toward Seminary Ridge. Hill added Maj. Gen. William Dorsey Pender's division to the assault, and the I Corps was driven back through the grounds of the Lutheran Seminary and Gettysburg streets.<sup>[25]</sup>

As the fighting to the west proceeded, two divisions of Ewell's Second Corps, marching west toward Cashtown in accordance with Lee's order for the army to concentrate in that vicinity, turned south on the Carlisle and Harrisburg roads toward Gettysburg, while the Union XI Corps (Maj. Gen. Oliver O. Howard) raced north on the Baltimore Pike and Taneytown Road. By early afternoon, the Federal line ran in a semicircle west, north, and northeast of Gettysburg.<sup>[26]</sup>

However, the Federals did not have enough troops; Cutler, who was deployed north of the Chambersburg Pike, had his right flank in the air. The leftmost division of the XI Corps was unable to deploy in time to strengthen the line, so Doubleday was forced to throw in reserve brigades to salvage his line.<sup>[27]</sup>

Around 2 p.m., the Confederate Second Corps divisions of Maj. Gens. Robert E. Rodes and Jubal Early assaulted and out-flanked the Union I and XI Corps positions north and northwest of town. The Confederate brigades of Col. Edward A. O'Neal and Brig. Gen. Alfred Iverson suffered severe losses assaulting the I Corps division of Brig. Gen. John C. Robinson south of Oak Hill. Early's division profited from a blunder by Brig. Gen. Francis C. Barlow, when he advanced his XI Corps division to Blocher's Knoll (directly north of town and now known as Barlow's Knoll); this represented a salient<sup>[28]</sup> in the corps line, susceptible to attack from multiple sides, and Early's troops overran Barlow's division, which constituted the right flank of the Union Army's position. Barlow was wounded and captured in the attack.<sup>[29]</sup>

As Federal positions collapsed both north and west of town, Gen. Howard ordered a retreat to the high ground south of town at Cemetery Hill, where he had left the division of Brig. Gen. Adolph von Steinwehr in reserve.<sup>[30]</sup> Maj. Gen. Winfield S. Hancock assumed command of the battlefield, sent by Meade when he heard that Reynolds had been killed. Hancock, commander of the II Corps and Meade's most trusted subordinate, was ordered to take command of the field and to determine whether Gettysburg was an appropriate place for a major battle.<sup>[31]</sup> Hancock told Howard, "I think this the strongest position by nature upon which to fight a battle that I ever saw." When Howard agreed, Hancock concluded the discussion: "Very well, sir, I select this as the battle-field." Hancock's determination had a morale-boosting effect on the retreating Union soldiers, but he played no direct tactical role on the first day.<sup>[32]</sup>

General Lee understood the defensive potential to the Union if they held this high ground. He sent orders to Ewell that Cemetery Hill be taken "if practicable." Ewell, who had previously served under Stonewall Jackson, a general well known for issuing peremptory orders, determined such an assault was not practicable and, thus, did not attempt it; this decision is considered by historians to be a great missed opportunity.<sup>[33]</sup>

The first day at Gettysburg, more significant than simply a prelude to the bloody second and third days, ranks as the 23rd biggest battle of the war by number of troops engaged. About one quarter of Meade's army (22,000 men) and one third of Lee's army (27,000) were engaged.<sup>[34]</sup>

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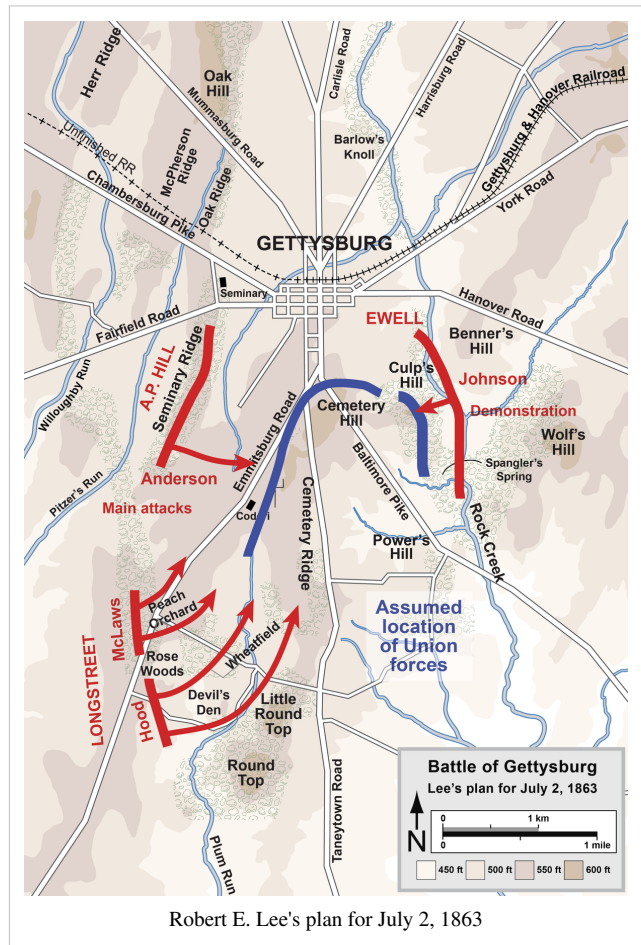
## Second day of battle

Further information: Second Day, Little Round Top, Culp's Hill, and Cemetery Hill

### Plans and movement to battle

Throughout the evening of July 1 and morning of July 2, most of the remaining infantry of both armies arrived on the field, including the Union II, III, V, VI, and XII Corps. Longstreet's third division, commanded by Maj. Gen. George Pickett, had begun the march from Chambersburg early in the morning; it did not arrive until late on July 2.<sup>[35]</sup>

The Union line ran from Culp's Hill southeast of the town, northwest to Cemetery Hill just south of town, then south for nearly two miles (3 km) along Cemetery Ridge, terminating just north of Little Round Top. Most of the XII Corps was on Culp's Hill; the remnants of I and XI Corps defended Cemetery Hill; II Corps covered most of the northern half of Cemetery Ridge; and III Corps was ordered to take up a position to its flank. The shape of the Union line is popularly described as a "fishhook" formation. The Confederate line paralleled the Union line about a mile (1,600 m) to the west on Seminary Ridge, ran east through the town, then curved southeast to a point opposite Culp's Hill. Thus, the Federal army had interior lines, while the Confederate line was nearly five miles (8 km) long.<sup>[36]</sup>



Robert E. Lee's plan for July 2, 1863

Lee's battle plan for July 2 called for Longstreet's First Corps to position itself stealthily to attack the Union left flank, facing northeast astraddle the Emmitsburg Road, and to roll up the Federal line. The attack sequence was to begin with Maj. Gens. John Bell Hood's and Lafayette McLaws's divisions, followed by Maj. Gen. Richard H. Anderson's division of Hill's Third Corps. The progressive *en echelon* sequence of this attack would prevent Meade from shifting troops from his center to bolster his left. At the same time, Maj. Gen. Edward "Allegheny" Johnson's and Jubal Early's Second Corps divisions were to make a demonstration against Culp's and Cemetery Hills (again, to prevent the shifting of Federal troops), and to turn the demonstration into a full-scale attack if a favorable opportunity presented itself.<sup>[37]</sup>

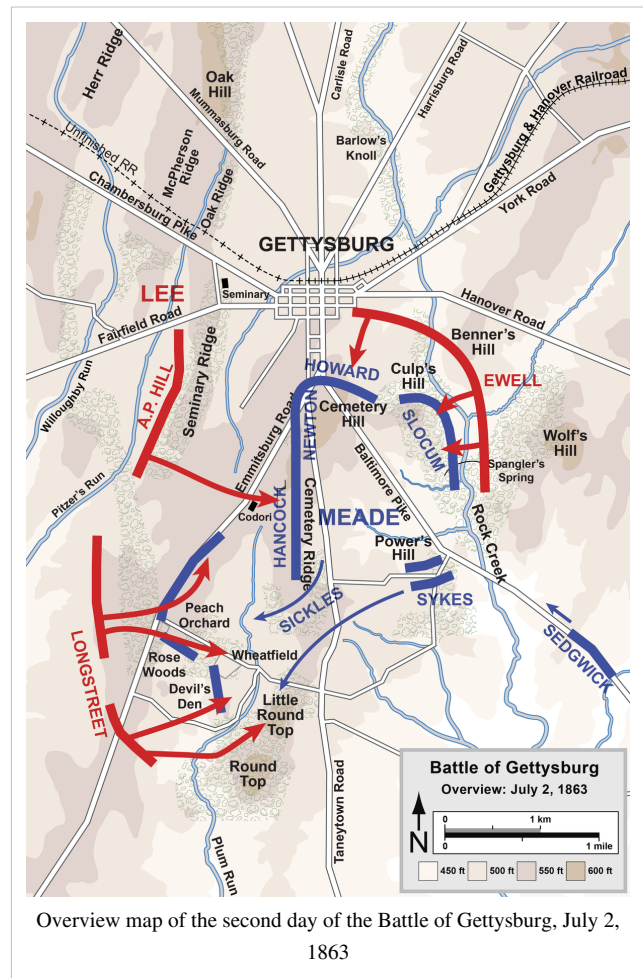
Lee's plan, however, was based on faulty intelligence, exacerbated by Stuart's continued absence from the battlefield. Instead of moving beyond the Federals' left and attacking their flank, Longstreet's left division, under McLaws, would face Maj. Gen. Daniel Sickles's III Corps directly in their path. Sickles had been dissatisfied with the position assigned him on the southern end of Cemetery Ridge. Seeing higher ground more favorable to artillery positions a half mile (800 m) to the west, he advanced his corps—without orders—to the slightly higher ground along the Emmitsburg Road. The new line ran from Devil's Den, northwest to the Sherfy farm's Peach Orchard, then northeast along the Emmitsburg Road to south of the Codori farm. This created an untenable salient at the Peach Orchard; Brig. Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys's division (in position along the Emmitsburg Road) and Maj. Gen. David B. Birney's division (to the south) were subject to attacks from two sides and were spread out over a longer front than their small corps could defend effectively.<sup>[38]</sup>



Longstreet's attack was to be made as early as practicable; however, Longstreet got permission from Lee to await the arrival of one of his brigades, and while marching to the assigned position, his men came within sight of a Union signal station on Little Round Top. Countermarching to avoid detection wasted much time, and Hood's and McLaws's divisions did not launch their attacks until just after 4 p.m. and 5 p.m., respectively.<sup>[39]</sup>

### Attacks on the Union left flank

As Longstreet's divisions slammed into the Union III Corps, Meade was forced to send 20,000 reinforcements<sup>[40]</sup> in the form of the entire V Corps, Brig. Gen. John C. Caldwell's division of the II Corps, most of the XII Corps, and small portions of the newly arrived VI Corps. The Confederate assault deviated from Lee's plan since Hood's division moved more easterly than intended, losing its alignment with the Emmitsburg Road,<sup>[41]</sup> attacking Devil's Den and Little Round Top. McLaws, coming in on Hood's left, drove multiple attacks into the thinly stretched III Corps in the Wheatfield and overwhelmed them in Sherfy's Peach Orchard. McLaws's attack eventually reached Plum Run Valley (the "Valley of Death") before being beaten back by the Pennsylvania Reserves division of the V Corps, moving down from Little Round Top. The III Corps was virtually destroyed as a combat unit in this battle, and Sickles's leg was amputated after it was shattered by a cannonball. Caldwell's division was destroyed piecemeal in the Wheatfield. Anderson's division, coming from McLaws's left and starting forward around 6 p.m., reached the crest of Cemetery Ridge, but it could not hold the position in the face of counterattacks from the II Corps, including an almost suicidal bayonet charge by the small 1st Minnesota regiment against a Confederate brigade, ordered in desperation by Hancock to buy time for reinforcements to arrive.<sup>[42]</sup>



As fighting raged in the Wheatfield and Devil's Den, Col. Strong Vincent of V Corps had a precarious hold on Little Round Top, an important hill at the extreme left of the Union line. His brigade of four relatively small regiments was able to resist repeated assaults by Brig. Gen. Evander M. Law's brigade of Hood's division. Meade's chief engineer, Brig. Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren, had realized the importance of this position, and dispatched Vincent's brigade, an artillery battery, and the 140th New York to occupy Little Round Top mere minutes before Hood's troops arrived. The defense of Little Round Top with a bayonet charge by the 20th Maine was one of the most fabled episodes in the Civil War and propelled Col. Joshua L. Chamberlain into prominence after the war.<sup>[43]</sup>

## Attacks on the Union right flank



Union breastworks on Culp's Hill

About 7:00 p.m., the Second Corps' attack by Johnson's division on Culp's Hill got off to a late start. Most of the hill's defenders, the Union XII Corps, had been sent to the left to defend against Longstreet's attacks, and the only portion of the corps remaining on the hill was a brigade of New Yorkers under Brig. Gen. George S. Greene. Because of Greene's insistence on constructing strong defensive works, and with reinforcements from the I and XI Corps, Greene's men held off the Confederate attackers, although the Southerners did capture a portion of the abandoned Federal works on the lower part of Culp's Hill.<sup>[44]</sup>

Just at dark, two of Jubal Early's brigades attacked the Union XI Corps positions on East Cemetery Hill where Col. Andrew L. Harris of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Division, came under a withering attack, losing half his men; however, Early failed to support his brigades in their attack, and Ewell's remaining division, that of Maj. Gen. Robert E. Rodes, failed to aid Early's attack by moving against Cemetery Hill from the west. The Union army's interior lines enabled its commanders to shift troops quickly to critical areas, and with reinforcements from II Corps, the Federal troops retained possession of East Cemetery Hill, and Early's brigades were forced to withdraw.<sup>[45]</sup>

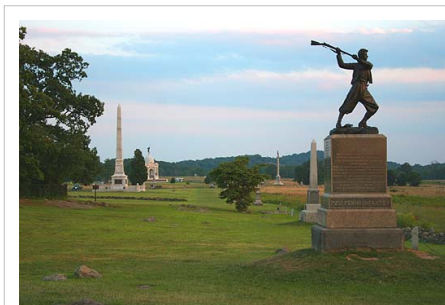
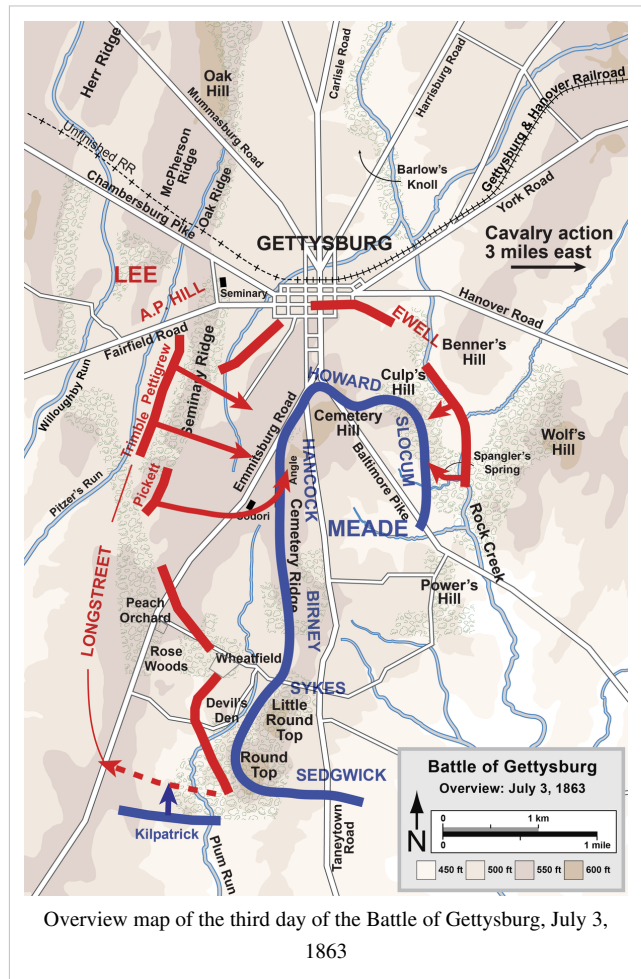
Jeb Stuart and his three cavalry brigades arrived in Gettysburg around noon but had no role in the second day's battle. Brig. Gen. Wade Hampton's brigade fought a minor engagement with newly promoted 23-year-old Brig. Gen. George Armstrong Custer's Michigan cavalry near Hunterstown to the northeast of Gettysburg.<sup>[46]</sup>

## Third day of battle

Further information: Culp's Hill, Pickett's Charge, and Third Day cavalry battles

General Lee wished to renew the attack on Friday, July 3, using the same basic plan as the previous day: Longstreet would attack the Federal left, while Ewell attacked Culp's Hill.<sup>[47]</sup> However, before Longstreet was ready, Union XII Corps troops started a dawn artillery bombardment against the Confederates on Culp's Hill in an effort to regain a portion of their lost works. The Confederates attacked, and the second fight for Culp's Hill ended around 11 a.m., after some seven hours of bitter combat.<sup>[48]</sup>

Lee was forced to change his plans. Longstreet would command Pickett's Virginia division of his own First Corps, plus six brigades from Hill's Corps, in an attack on the Federal II Corps position at the right center of the Union line on Cemetery Ridge. Prior to the attack, all the artillery the Confederacy could bring to bear on the Federal positions would bombard and weaken the enemy's line.<sup>[49]</sup>



The "High Water Mark" on Cemetery Ridge as it appears today. The monument to the 72nd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry Regiment ("Baxter's Philadelphia Fire Zouaves") appears at right, the Copse of Trees to the left.

Around 1 p.m., from 150 to 170 Confederate guns<sup>[50]</sup> began an artillery bombardment that was probably the largest of the war. In order to save valuable ammunition for the infantry attack that they knew would follow, the Army of the Potomac's artillery, under the command of Brig. Gen. Henry Jackson Hunt, at first did not return the enemy's fire. After waiting about 15 minutes, about 80 Federal cannons added to the din. The Army of Northern Virginia was critically low on artillery ammunition, and the cannonade did not significantly affect the Union position. Around 3 p.m., the cannon fire subsided, and 12,500 Southern soldiers stepped from the ridgeline and advanced the three-quarters of a mile (1,200 m) to Cemetery Ridge in what is known to history as "Pickett's Charge". As the Confederates approached, there was fierce flanking artillery fire from Union positions on Cemetery Hill and north

of Little Round Top, and musket and canister fire from Hancock's II Corps. In the Union center, the commander of artillery had held fire during the Confederate bombardment, leading Southern commanders to believe the Northern cannon batteries had been knocked out. However, they opened fire on the Confederate infantry during their approach with devastating results. Nearly one half of the attackers did not return to their own lines. Although the Federal line

wavered and broke temporarily at a jog called the "Angle" in a low stone fence, just north of a patch of vegetation called the Copse of Trees, reinforcements rushed into the breach, and the Confederate attack was repulsed. The farthest advance of Brig. Gen. Lewis A. Armistead's brigade of Maj. Gen. George Pickett's division at the Angle is referred to as the "High-water mark of the Confederacy", arguably representing the closest the South ever came to its goal of achieving independence from the Union via military victory.<sup>[51]</sup>

There were two significant cavalry engagements on July 3. Stuart was sent to guard the Confederate left flank and was to be prepared to exploit any success the infantry might achieve on Cemetery Hill by flanking the Federal right and hitting their trains and lines of communications. Three miles (5 km) east of Gettysburg, in what is now called "East Cavalry Field" (not shown on the accompanying map, but between the York and Hanover Roads), Stuart's forces collided with Federal cavalry: Brig. Gen. David McMurtre Gregg's division and Brig. Gen. Custer's brigade. A lengthy mounted battle, including hand-to-hand sabre combat, ensued. Custer's charge, leading the 1st Michigan Cavalry, blunted the attack by Wade Hampton's brigade, blocking Stuart from achieving his objectives in the Federal rear. Meanwhile, after hearing news of the day's victory, Brig. Gen. Judson Kilpatrick launched a cavalry attack against the infantry positions of Longstreet's Corps southwest of Big Round Top. Brig. Gen. Elon J. Farnsworth protested against the futility of such a move but obeyed orders. Farnsworth was killed in the attack, and his brigade suffered significant losses.<sup>[52]</sup>

## Aftermath

### Casualties

The two armies suffered between 46,000 and 51,000 casualties. Union casualties were 23,055 (3,155 killed, 14,531 wounded, 5,369 captured or missing),<sup>[1]</sup> while Confederate casualties are more difficult to estimate. Many authors have referred to as many as 28,000 Confederate casualties,<sup>[53]</sup> but Busey and Martin's more recent definitive 2005 work, *Regimental Strengths and Losses*, documents 23,231 (4,708 killed, 12,693 wounded, 5,830 captured or missing).<sup>[1]</sup> Nearly a third of Lee's general officers were killed, wounded, or captured.<sup>[54]</sup> The casualties for both sides during the entire campaign were 57,225.<sup>[55]</sup>

The following tables summarize casualties by corps for the Union and Confederate forces during the three day battle.<sup>[56]</sup>



"The Harvest of Death": Union dead on the battlefield at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, photographed July 5 or July 6, 1863, by Timothy H. O'Sullivan.

Union Corps	Casualties (k/w/m)
I Corps	6059 (666/3231/2162)
II Corps	4369 (797/3194/378)
III Corps	4211 (593/3029/589)
V Corps	2187 (365/1611/211)
VI Corps	242 (27/185/30)
XI Corps	3807 (369/1924/1514)
XII Corps	1082 (204/812/66)
Cavalry Corps	852 (91/354/407)
Artillery Reserve	242 (43/187/12)

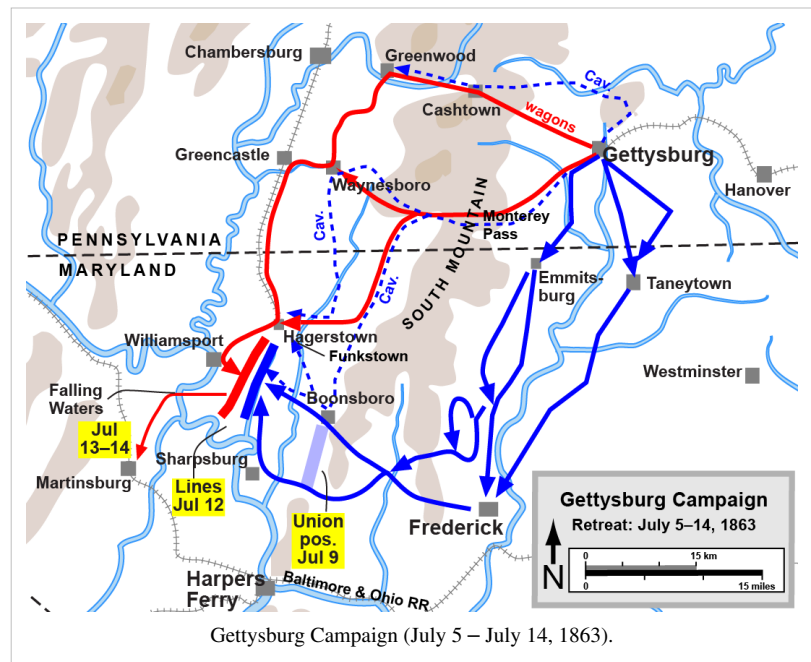
Confederate Corps	Casualties (k/w/m)
First Corps	7665 (1617/4205/1843)
Second Corps	6686 (1301/3629/1756)
Third Corps	8495 (1724/4683/2088)
Cavalry Corps	380 (66/174/140)

Bruce Catton wrote, "The town of Gettysburg looked as if some universal moving day had been interrupted by catastrophe."<sup>[57]</sup> But there was only one documented civilian death during the battle: Ginnie Wade (also widely known as Jennie), 20 years old, was hit by a stray bullet that passed through her kitchen in town while she was making bread.<sup>[58]</sup> Nearly 8,000 had been killed outright; these bodies, lying in the hot summer sun, needed to be buried quickly. Over 3,000 horse carcasses<sup>[59]</sup> were burned in a series of piles south of town; townsfolk became violently ill from the stench.<sup>[60]</sup>

## Confederate retreat

Further information: Retreat from Gettysburg

The armies stared at one another in a heavy rain across the bloody fields on July 4, the same day that the Vicksburg garrison surrendered to Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. Lee had reformed his lines into a defensive position on Seminary Ridge the night of July 3, evacuating the town of Gettysburg. The Confederates remained on the battlefield, hoping that Meade would attack, but the cautious Union commander decided against the risk, a decision for which he would later be criticized. Both armies began to collect their remaining wounded and bury some of the dead. A proposal by Lee for a prisoner exchange was rejected by Meade.<sup>[61]</sup>



Lee started his Army of Northern Virginia in motion late the evening of July 4 towards Fairfield and Chambersburg. Cavalry under Brig. Gen. John D. Imboden was entrusted to escort the miles-long wagon train of supplies and wounded men that Lee wanted to take back to Virginia with him, using the route through Cashtown and Hagerstown to Williamsport, Maryland. Meade's army followed, although the pursuit was half-spirited. The recently rain-swollen Potomac trapped Lee's army on the north bank of the river for a time, but when the Federals finally caught up, the Confederates had forded the river. The rear-guard action at Falling Waters on July 14 added some more names to the long casualty lists, including General Pettigrew, who was mortally wounded.<sup>[62]</sup>

In a brief letter to Maj. Gen. Henry W. Halleck written on July 7, Lincoln remarked on the two major Union victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. He continued:

Now, if Gen. Meade can complete his work so gloriously prosecuted thus far, by the literal or substantial destruction of Lee's army, the rebellion will be over.<sup>[63]</sup>



Halleck then relayed the contents of Lincoln's letter to Meade in a telegram. Despite repeated pleas from Lincoln and Halleck, which continued over the next week, Meade did not pursue Lee's army aggressively enough to destroy it before it crossed back over the Potomac River to safety in the South. The campaign continued into Virginia with light engagements until July 23, in the minor Battle of Manassas Gap, after which Meade abandoned any attempts at pursuit and the two armies took up positions across from each other on the Rappahannock River.<sup>[64]</sup>

### Union reaction to the news of the victory

The news of the Union victory electrified the North. A headline in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* proclaimed "VICTORY! WATERLOO ECLIPSED!" New York diarist George Templeton Strong wrote:<sup>[65]</sup>

The results of this victory are priceless. ... The charm of Robert E. Lee's invincibility is broken. The Army of the Potomac has at last found a general that can handle it, and has stood nobly up to its terrible work in spite of its long disheartening list of hard-fought failures. ... Copperheads are palsied and dumb for the moment at least. ... Government is strengthened four-fold at home and abroad.

— George Templeton Strong, *Diary*, p. 330.

However, the Union enthusiasm soon dissipated as the public realized that Lee's army had escaped destruction and the war would continue. Lincoln complained to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles that "Our army held the war in the hollow of their hand and they would not close it!"<sup>[66]</sup> Brig. Gen. Alexander S. Webb wrote to his father on July 17, stating that such Washington politicians as "Chase, Seward and others," disgusted with Meade, "write to me that Lee really won that Battle!"<sup>[67]</sup>

### Effect on the Confederacy

The Confederates had lost politically as well as militarily. During the final hours of the battle, Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens was approaching the Union lines at Norfolk, Virginia, under a flag of truce. Although his formal instructions from Confederate President Jefferson Davis had limited his powers to negotiations on prisoner exchanges and other procedural matters, historian James M. McPherson speculates that he had informal goals of presenting peace overtures. Davis had hoped that Stephens would reach Washington from the south while Lee's victorious army was marching toward it from the north. President Lincoln, upon hearing of the Gettysburg results, refused Stephens's request to pass through the lines. Furthermore, when the news reached London, any lingering hopes of European recognition of the Confederacy were finally abandoned. Henry Adams wrote, "The disasters of the rebels are unredeemed by even any hope of success. It is now conceded that all idea of intervention is at an end."<sup>[68]</sup>

The immediate reaction of the Southern military and public sectors was that Gettysburg was a setback, not a disaster. The sentiment was that Lee had been successful on July 1 and had fought a valiant battle on July 2–3, but could not dislodge the Union Army from the strong defensive position to which it fled. The Confederates successfully stood their ground on July 4 and withdrew only after they realized Meade would not attack them. The withdrawal to the Potomac that could have been a disaster was handled masterfully. Furthermore, the Army of the Potomac had been kept away from Virginia farmlands for the summer and all predicted that Meade would be too timid to threaten them for the rest of the year. Lee himself had a positive view of the campaign, writing to his wife that the army had returned "rather sooner than I had originally contemplated, but having accomplished what I proposed on leaving the Rappahannock, viz., relieving the Valley of the presence of the enemy and drawing his Army north of the Potomac." He was quoted as saying to Maj. John Seddon, brother of the Confederate secretary of war, "Sir, we did whip them at Gettysburg, and it will be seen for the next six months that *that army* will be as quiet as a sucking dove." Some Southern publications, such as the *Charleston Mercury*, criticized Lee's actions in the campaign and on August 8 he offered his resignation to President Davis, who quickly rejected it.<sup>[69]</sup>

Gettysburg became a postbellum focus of the "Lost Cause", a movement by writers such as Edward A. Pollard and Jubal Early to explain the reasons for the Confederate defeat in the war. A fundamental premise of their argument

was that the South was doomed because of the overwhelming advantage in manpower and industrial might possessed by the North. However, they claim it also suffered because Robert E. Lee, who up until this time had been almost invincible, was betrayed by the failures of some of his key subordinates at Gettysburg: Ewell, for failing to seize Cemetery Hill on July 1; Stuart, for depriving the army of cavalry intelligence for a key part of the campaign; and especially Longstreet, for failing to attack on July 2 as early and as forcefully as Lee had originally intended. In this view, Gettysburg was seen as a great lost opportunity, in which a decisive victory by Lee could have meant the end of the war in the Confederacy's favor.<sup>[70]</sup>

## Gettysburg Address

The ravages of war were still evident in Gettysburg more than four months later when, on November 19, the Soldiers' National Cemetery was dedicated. During this ceremony, President Abraham Lincoln honored the fallen and redefined the purpose of the war in his historic Gettysburg Address.<sup>[71]</sup>

Today, the Gettysburg National Cemetery and Gettysburg National Military Park are maintained by the U.S. National Park Service as two of the nation's most revered historical landmarks.



Gettysburg National Cemetery

## Historical assessment

### Decisive victory?

The nature of the result of the Battle of Gettysburg has been the subject of controversy for years. Although not seen as overwhelmingly significant at the time, particularly since the war continued for almost two years, in retrospect it has often been cited as the "turning point", usually in combination with the fall of Vicksburg the following day.<sup>[3]</sup> This is based on the hindsight that, after Gettysburg, Lee's army conducted no more strategic offensives—his army merely reacted to the initiative of Ulysses S. Grant in 1864 and 1865—and by the speculative viewpoint of the Lost Cause writers that a Confederate victory at Gettysburg might have resulted in the end of the war.<sup>[72]</sup>

[The Army of the Potomac] had won a victory. It might be less of a victory than Mr. Lincoln had hoped for, but it was nevertheless a victory—and, because of that, it was no longer possible for the Confederacy to win the war. The North might still lose it, to be sure, if the soldiers or the people should lose heart, but outright defeat was no longer in the cards.

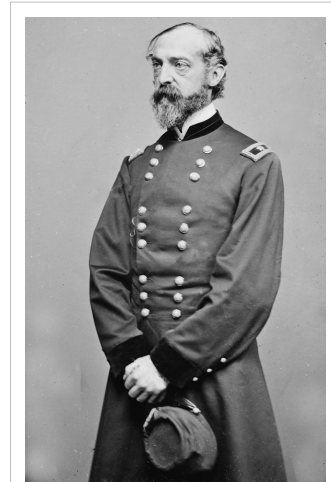
Bruce Catton, *Glory Road*<sup>[73]</sup>

It is currently a widely held view that Gettysburg was a decisive victory for the Union, but the term is imprecise. It is inarguable that Lee's offensive on July 3 was turned back decisively and his campaign in Pennsylvania was terminated prematurely (although the Confederates at the time argued that this was a temporary setback and that the goals of the campaign were largely met). However, when the more common definition of "decisive victory" is intended—an indisputable military victory of a battle that determines or significantly influences the ultimate result of a conflict—historians are divided. For example, David J. Eicher called Gettysburg a "strategic loss for the Confederacy" and James M. McPherson wrote that "Lee and his men would go on to earn further laurels. But they never again possessed the power and reputation they carried into Pennsylvania those palmy summer days of 1863." However, Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones wrote that the "strategic impact of the Battle of Gettysburg was ... fairly limited." Steven E. Woodworth wrote that "Gettysburg proved only the near impossibility of decisive action in the Eastern theater." Edwin Coddington pointed out the heavy toll on the Army of the Potomac and that "after the battle Meade no longer possessed a truly effective instrument for the accomplishments of his task. The army needed a thorough reorganization with new commanders and fresh troops, but these changes were not made until Grant

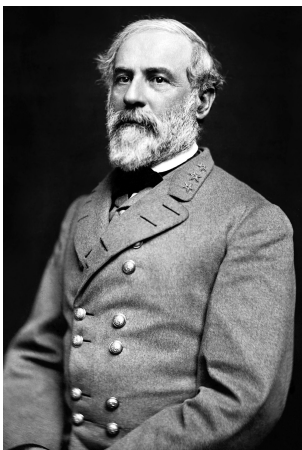
appeared on the scene in March 1864." Joseph T. Glatthaar wrote that "Lost opportunities and near successes plagued the Army of Northern Virginia during its Northern invasion," yet after Gettysburg, "without the distractions of duty as an invading force, without the breakdown of discipline, the Army of Northern Virginia [remained] an extremely formidable force." Ed Bearss wrote, "Lee's invasion of the North had been a costly failure. Nevertheless, at best the Army of the Potomac had simply preserved the strategic stalemate in the Eastern Theater ..." Peter Carmichael refers to the "horrendous losses at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, which effectively destroyed Lee's offensive capacity," implying that these cumulative losses were not the result of a single battle. Thomas Goss, writing in the U.S. Army's *Military Review* journal on the definition of "decisive" and the application of that description to Gettysburg, concludes: "For all that was decided and accomplished, the Battle of Gettysburg fails to earn the label 'decisive battle'."<sup>[74]</sup>

## Lee vs. Meade

Prior to Gettysburg, Robert E. Lee had established a reputation as an almost invincible general, achieving stunning victories against superior numbers—although usually at the cost of high casualties to his army—during the Seven Days, the Northern Virginia Campaign (including the Second Battle of Bull Run), Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville. Only the Maryland Campaign, with its tactically inconclusive Battle of Antietam, had been less than successful. Therefore, historians have attempted to explain how Lee's winning streak was interrupted so dramatically at Gettysburg. Although the issue is tainted by attempts to portray history and Lee's reputation in a manner supporting different partisan goals, the major factors in Lee's loss arguably can be attributed to: (1) Lee's overconfidence in the invincibility of his men; (2) the performance of his subordinates, and his management thereof; (3) health issues, and; (4) the performance of his opponent, George G. Meade, and the Army of the Potomac.



George G. Meade



Robert E. Lee

Throughout the campaign, Lee was influenced by the belief that his men were invincible; most of Lee's experiences with the Army of Northern Virginia had convinced him of this, including the great victory at Chancellorsville in early May and the rout of the Union troops at Gettysburg on July 1. Since morale plays an important role in military victory when other factors are equal, Lee did not want to dampen his army's desire to fight and resisted suggestions, principally by Longstreet, to withdraw from the recently captured Gettysburg to select a ground more favorable to his army. War correspondent Peter W. Alexander wrote that Lee "acted, probably, under the impression that his troops were able to carry any position however formidable. If such was the case, he committed an error, such however as the ablest commanders will sometimes fall into." Lee himself concurred with this judgment, writing to President Davis, "No blame can be attached to the army for its failure to accomplish what was projected by me, nor should it be censured for the unreasonable expectations of the public—I am alone

to blame, in perhaps expecting too much of its prowess and valor."<sup>[75]</sup>

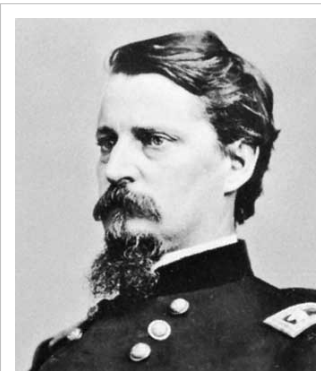
The most controversial assessments of the battle involve the performance of Lee's subordinates. The dominant theme of the Lost Cause writers and many other historians is that Lee's senior generals failed him in crucial ways, directly causing the loss of the battle; the alternative viewpoint is that Lee did not manage his subordinates adequately, and did not thereby compensate for their shortcomings.<sup>[76]</sup> Two of his corps commanders—Richard S. Ewell and A.P.

Hill—had only recently been promoted and were not fully accustomed to Lee's style of command, in which he provided only general objectives and guidance to their former commander, Stonewall Jackson; Jackson translated these into detailed, specific orders to his division commanders.<sup>[77]</sup> All four of Lee's principal commanders received criticism during the campaign and battle:<sup>[78]</sup>

- James Longstreet suffered most severely from the wrath of the Lost Cause authors, not the least because he directly criticized Lee in postbellum writings and became a Republican after the war. His critics accuse him of attacking much later than Lee intended on July 2, squandering a chance to hit the Union Army before its defensive positions had firmed up. They also question his lack of motivation to attack strongly on July 2 and July 3 because he had argued that the army should have maneuvered to a place where it would force Meade to attack them. The alternative view is that Lee was in close contact with Longstreet during the battle, agreed to delays on the morning of July 2, and never criticized Longstreet's performance. (There is also considerable speculation about what an attack might have looked like before Dan Sickles moved the III Corps toward the Peach Orchard.)<sup>[79]</sup>
- J.E.B. Stuart deprived Lee of cavalry intelligence during a good part of the campaign by taking his three best brigades on a path away from the army's. This arguably led to Lee's surprise at Hooker's vigorous pursuit; the meeting engagement on July 1 that escalated into the full battle prematurely; and it also prevented Lee from understanding the full disposition of the enemy on July 2. The disagreements regarding Stuart's culpability for the situation center around the relatively vague orders issued by Lee, but most modern historians agree that both generals were responsible to some extent for the failure of the cavalry's mission early in the campaign.<sup>[80]</sup>
- Richard S. Ewell has been universally criticized for failing to seize the high ground on the afternoon of July 1. Once again the disagreement centers on Lee's orders, which provided general guidance for Ewell to act "if practicable." Many historians speculate that Stonewall Jackson, if he had survived Chancellorsville, would have aggressively seized Culp's Hill, rendering Cemetery Hill indefensible, and changing the entire complexion of the battle. A differently worded order from Lee might have made the difference with this subordinate.<sup>[81]</sup>
- A.P. Hill has received some criticism for his ineffective performance. His actions caused the battle to begin and then escalate on July 1, despite Lee's orders not to bring on a general engagement (although historians point out that Hill kept Lee well informed of his actions during the day). However, illness minimized his personal involvement in the remainder of the battle, and Lee took the explicit step of removing troops from Hill's corps and giving them to Longstreet for Pickett's Charge.<sup>[82]</sup>

In addition to Hill's illness, Lee's performance was affected by his own illness, which has been speculated as chest pains due to angina. He wrote to Jefferson Davis that his physical condition prevented him from offering full supervision in the field, and said, "I am so dull that in making use of the eyes of others I am frequently misled."<sup>[83]</sup>

As a final factor, Lee faced a new and formidable opponent in George G. Meade, and the Army of the Potomac fought well on its home territory. Although new to his army command, Meade deployed his forces relatively effectively; relied on strong subordinates such as Winfield S. Hancock to make decisions where and when they were needed; took great advantage of defensive positions; nimbly shifted defensive resources on interior lines to parry strong threats; and, unlike some of his predecessors, stood his ground throughout the battle in the face of fierce Confederate attacks. Lee was quoted before the battle as saying Meade "would commit no blunders on my front and if I make one ... will make haste to take advantage of it." That prediction proved to be correct at Gettysburg. Stephen Sears wrote, "The fact of the matter is that George G. Meade, unexpectedly and against all odds, thoroughly outgeneraled Robert E. Lee at Gettysburg." Edwin B. Coddington wrote that the soldiers of the Army of the Potomac received a "sense of triumph



Winfield S. Hancock

which grew into an imperishable faith in [themselves]. The men knew what they could do under an extremely competent general; one of lesser ability and courage could well have lost the battle."<sup>[84]</sup>

Meade had his own detractors as well. Similar to the situation with Lee, Meade suffered partisan attacks about his performance at Gettysburg, but he had the misfortune of experiencing them in person. Supporters of his predecessor, Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker, lambasted Meade before the U.S. Congress's Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, where Radical Republicans suspected that Meade was a Copperhead and tried in vain to relieve him from command. Daniel E. Sickles and Daniel Butterfield accused Meade of planning to retreat from Gettysburg during the battle. Most politicians, including Lincoln, criticized Meade for what they considered to be his tepid pursuit of Lee after the battle. A number of Meade's most competent subordinates—Winfield S. Hancock, John Gibbon, Gouverneur K. Warren, and Henry J. Hunt, all heroes of the battle—defended Meade in print, but Meade was embittered by the overall experience.<sup>[85]</sup>

## Commemoration in U.S. postage and coinage

A commemorative half dollar for the battle was produced in 1936. As was typical for the period, mintage was very low, just 26,928.

During the Civil War Centennial, the U.S. Post Office issued five postage stamps commemorating the 100th anniversaries of famous battles, as they occurred over a four-year period, beginning with the Battle of Fort Sumter Centennial issue of 1961. The Battle of Shiloh commemorative stamp was issued in 1962, the Battle of Gettysburg in 1963, the Battle of the Wilderness in 1964, and the Appomattox Centennial commemorative stamp in 1965.<sup>[86]</sup>



Gettysburg Centennial Commemorative issue of 1963

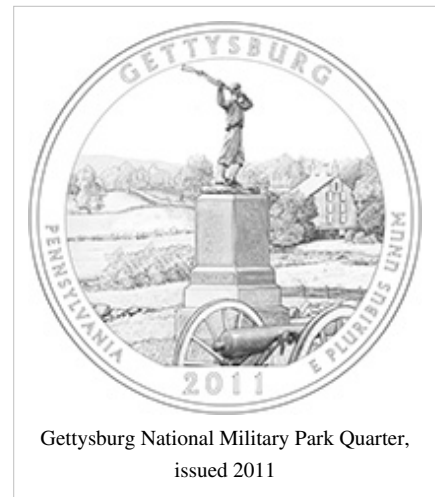
On January 24, 2011, the America the Beautiful quarters program will introduce a 25-cent coin commemorating Gettysburg National Military Park and the Battle of Gettysburg. The reverse side of the coin depicts the monument on Cemetery Ridge to the 72nd Pennsylvania Infantry.<sup>[87]</sup>

## In popular media

The Battle of Gettysburg was depicted in the 1993 film, *Gettysburg*, based on Michael Shaara's 1974 novel *The Killer Angels*. The film and novel focused primarily on the actions of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, John Buford, Robert E. Lee, and James Longstreet during the battle. The first day focused on Buford's cavalry defense, the second day on Chamberlain's defense at Little Round Top, and the third day on Pickett's Charge.

In the 2004 mockumentary *C.S.A.: The Confederate States of America*, the Battle of Gettysburg is won by the Confederate forces as a result of politician Judah P. Benjamin successfully convincing the United Kingdom and France to aid the Confederacy. This causes a butterfly effect that sees the Confederacy win the Civil War and subsequently conquer all of North and South America except Canada.<sup>[88]</sup>

Iced Earth's three-part song cycle *Gettysburg (1863)*, published in 2004, dramatizes the battle.



Gettysburg National Military Park Quarter,  
issued 2011



## Notes

- [1] Robert D. Quigley, *Civil War Spoken Here: A Dictionary of Mispronounced People, Places and Things of the 1860's* (Collingswood, NJ: C. W. Historicals, 1993), p. 68. ISBN 0-9637745-0-6.
- [2] The Battle of Antietam, the culmination of Lee's first invasion of the North, had the largest number of casualties in a single day, about 23,000.
- [3] Rawley, p. 147; Sauers, p. 827; Gallagher, *Lee and His Army*, p. 83; McPherson, p. 665; Eicher, p. 550. Gallagher and McPherson cite the combination of Gettysburg and Vicksburg as the turning point. Eicher uses the arguably related expression, "High-water mark of the Confederacy".
- [4] Coddington, pp. 8–9; Eicher, p. 490.
- [5] Eicher, p. 491.
- [6] Symonds, p. 36.
- [7] Trudeau, pp. 45, 66.
- [8] Lee's orders from Chambersburg, June 27, 1863 (<http://books.google.com/books?id=YmsFAAAAQAAJ&printsec=titlepage#PRA1-PA323,M1>)
- [9] Symonds, pp. 49–54.
- [10] Nye, pp. 272–78.
- [11] Symonds, pp. 41–43; Sears, pp. 103–106; Esposito, text for Map 94 ( Map 34b ([http://web.archive.org/web/20100607100747/http://www.military.com/Resources/ResourceFileView/civilwar\\_maps\\_map34\\_largerview.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20100607100747/http://www.military.com/Resources/ResourceFileView/civilwar_maps_map34_largerview.htm)) in the online version); Eicher, pp. 504–507; McPherson, p. 649.
- [12] Sears, p. 123; Trudeau, p. 128.
- [13] Coddington, pp. 181, 189.
- [14] Eicher, pp. 508–509, discounts Heth's claim because the previous visit by Early to Gettysburg would have made the lack of shoe factories or stores obvious. However, many mainstream historians accept Heth's account: Sears, p. 136; Foote, p. 465; Clark, p. 35; Tucker, pp. 97–98; Martin, p. 25; Pfanz, *First Day*, p. 25.
- [15] Eicher, p. 508; Tucker, pp. 99–102.
- [16] Sears, pp. 155–58.
- [17] Battle of Gettysburg: "Who Really Fired the First Shot?" (<http://www.historynet.com/battle-of-gettysburg-who-really-fired-the-first-shot.htm>)
- [18] Marcellus Jones Monument at Gettysburg (<http://www.brotherswar.com/Gettysburg-Day-1Pic-15.htm>)
- [19] Martin, pp. 80–81. The troopers carried single-shot, breechloading carbines manufactured by Sharps, Burnside, and others. It is a modern myth that they were armed with multi-shot repeating carbines. Nevertheless, they were able to fire two or three times faster than a muzzle-loaded carbine or rifle.
- [20] Symonds, p. 71; Coddington, p. 266; Eicher, pp. 510–11.
- [21] Tucker, pp. 112–17.
- [22] Foote, p. 468
- [23] Tucker, p. 184; Symonds, p. 74; Pfanz, *First Day*, pp. 269–75.
- [24] Busey and Martin, pp. 298, 501.
- [25] Pfanz, *First Day*, pp. 275–93.
- [26] Clark, p. 53.
- [27] Pfanz, *First Day*, p. 158.
- [28] Pfanz, *First Day*, p. 230.
- [29] Pfanz, *First Day*, pp. 156–238.
- [30] Pfanz, *First Day*, p. 294.
- [31] Pfanz, *First Day*, pp. 337–38; Sears, pp. 223–25.
- [32] Martin, pp. 482–88.
- [33] Pfanz, *First Day*, p. 344; Eicher, p. 517; Sears, p. 228; Trudeau, p. 253. Both Sears and Trudeau record "if possible."
- [34] Martin, p. 9, citing Thomas L. Livermore's *Numbers & Losses in the Civil War in America* (Houghton Mifflin, 1900).
- [35] Coddington, p. 333; Tucker, p. 327.
- [36] Clark, p. 74; Eicher, p. 521.
- [37] Sears, p. 255; Clark, p. 69.
- [38] Pfanz, *Second Day*, pp. 93–97; Eicher, pp. 523–24.
- [39] Pfanz, *Second Day*, pp. 119–23.
- [40] Harman, p. 59.
- [41] Harman, p. 57.
- [42] Sears, pp. 312–24; Eicher, pp. 530–35; Coddington, p. 423.
- [43] Eicher, pp. 527–30; Clark, pp. 81–85.
- [44] Eicher, pp. 537–38; Sauers, p. 835; Pfanz, *Culp's Hill*, pp. 205–34; Clark, pp. 115–16.
- [45] Pfanz, *Culp's Hill*, pp. 235–83; Clark, pp. 116–18; Eicher, pp. 538–39.
- [46] Sears, p. 257; Longacre, pp. 198–99.

- [47] Harman, p. 63.
- [48] Pfan, *Culp's Hill*, pp. 284–352; Eicher, pp. 540–41; Coddington, pp. 465–75.
- [49] Eicher, p. 542; Coddington, pp. 485–86.
- [50] See discussion of varying gun estimates in Pickett's Charge article footnote.
- [51] McPherson, pp. 661–63; Clark, pp. 133–44; Symonds, pp. 214–41; Eicher, pp. 543–49.
- [52] Eicher, pp. 549–50; Longacre, pp. 226–31, 240–44; Sauers, p. 836; Wert, pp. 272–80.
- [53] Examples of the varying Confederate casualties for July 1–3 are Sears, p. 498 (22,625); Coddington, p. 536 (20,451, "and very likely more"); Trudeau, p. 529 (22,874); Eicher, p. 550 (22,874, "but probably actually totaled 28,000 or more"); McPherson, p. 664 (28,000); Esposito, map 99 ("near 28,000"); Clark, p. 150 (20,448, "but probably closer to 28,000," which he inaccurately cites as a nearly 40% loss); Woodworth, p. 209 ("at least equal to Meade's and possibly as high as 28,000"); NPS (<http://web.archive.org/web/20110513133710/http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/abpp/battles/pa002.htm>) (28,000).
- [54] Glatthaar, p. 282.
- [55] Sears, p. 513.
- [56] Busey and Martin, pp. 125–47, 260–315. Headquarters element casualties account for the minor differences in army totals stated previously.
- [57] Catton, p. 325.
- [58] Sears, p. 391.
- [59] Sears, p. 511.
- [60] Woodworth, p. 216.
- [61] Eicher, p. 550; Coddington, pp. 539–44; Clark, pp. 146–47; Sears, p. 469; Wert, p. 300.
- [62] Clark, pp. 147–57; Longacre, pp. 268–69.
- [63] Coddington, p. 564.
- [64] Coddington, pp. 535–74; Sears, pp. 496–97; Eicher, p. 596; Wittenberg et al., *One Continuous Fight*, pp. 345–46..
- [65] McPherson, p. 664.
- [66] Donald, p. 446; Woodworth, p. 217.
- [67] Coddington, p. 573.
- [68] McPherson, pp. 650, 664.
- [69] Gallagher, *Lee and His Army*, pp. 86, 93, 102–05; Sears, pp. 501–502; McPherson, p. 665, in contrast to Gallagher, depicts Lee as "profoundly depressed" about the battle.
- [70] Gallagher, *Lee and His Generals*, pp. 207–208; Sears, p. 503; Woodworth, p. 221. Gallagher's essay "Jubal A. Early, The Lost Cause, and Civil War History: A Persistent Legacy" in *Lee and His Generals* is a good overview of the Lost Cause movement.
- [71] White, p. 251. White refers to Lincoln's use of the term "new birth of freedom" and writes, "The *new birth* that slowly emerged in Lincoln's politics meant that on November 19 at Gettysburg he was no longer, as in his inaugural address, defending an old Union but proclaiming a new Union. The old Union contained and attempted to restrain slavery. The new Union would fulfill the promise of liberty, the crucial step into the future that the Founders had failed to take."
- [72] McPherson, p. 665; Gallagher, *Lee and His Generals*, pp. 207–208.
- [73] Catton, p. 331.
- [74] Eicher, p. 550; McPherson, p. 665; Hattaway and Jones, p. 415; Woodworth, p. xiii; Coddington, p. 573; Glatthaar, p. 288; Bearss, p. 202; Carmichael, p. xvii; Goss, Major Thomas (July–August 2004). "Gettysburg's "Decisive Battle"" (<http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/milreview/goss.pdf>). *Military Review*: 11–16. . Retrieved November 11, 2009.
- [75] Sears, pp. 499–500; Glatthaar, p. 287; Fuller, p. 198, states that Lee's "overweening confidence in the superiority of his soldiers over his enemy possessed him."
- [76] For example, Sears, p. 504: "In the final analysis, it was Robert E. Lee's inability to manage his generals that went to the heart of the failed campaign." Glatthaar, pp. 285–86, criticizes the inability of the generals to coordinate their actions as a whole. Fuller, p. 198, states that Lee "maintained no grip over the operations" of his army.
- [77] Fuller, p. 195, for example, refers to orders to Stuart that "were as usual vague." Fuller, p. 197, wrote "As was [Lee's] custom, he relied on verbal instructions, and left all details to his subordinates."
- [78] Woodworth, pp. 209–10.
- [79] Sears, pp. 501–502; McPherson, pp. 656–57; Coddington, pp. 375–80; A more detailed collection of historical assessments of Longstreet at Gettysburg may be found in James Longstreet#Gettysburg.
- [80] Sears, p. 502; A more detailed collection of historical assessments of Stuart in the Gettysburg Campaign may be found in J.E.B. Stuart#Gettysburg.
- [81] McPherson, p. 654; Coddington, pp. 317–19; Eicher, pp. 517–18; Sears, p. 503.
- [82] Sears, pp. 502–503.
- [83] Sears, p. 500.
- [84] Sears, p. 506; Coddington, p. 573.
- [85] Sears, pp. 505–507.
- [86] Smithsonian National Postal Museum (<http://arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=1&cmd=1&mode=&tid=2038859>)
- [87] U.S. Mint America the Beautiful Quarters Program website ([http://www.usmint.gov/mint\\_programs/atb/?local=gettysburg](http://www.usmint.gov/mint_programs/atb/?local=gettysburg))
- [88] Confederate Legacy Presents C.S.A.: A Historical Timeline (<http://www.csathemovie.com/timeline/>)

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## Further reading

 External images	
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	CivilWar.org maps & photos ( <a href="http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/gettysburg.html">http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/gettysburg.html</a> )
	Gettysburg.edu paintings & photos ( <a href="http://www.gettysburg.edu/library/gettdigital/civil_war/civilwar.htm">http://www.gettysburg.edu/library/gettdigital/civil_war/civilwar.htm</a> )
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  - U.S. Army's Interactive Battle of Gettysburg with Narratives (<http://www.army.mil/gettysburg>)
  - Military History Online: The Battle of Gettysburg (<http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/gettysburg/>)
  - The Brothers War: The Battle of Gettysburg (<http://www.brotherswar.com/>)
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  - List of 53 Confederate generals at Gettysburg (<http://www.bklyn-genealogy-info.com/Military/ConfederateGenerals.html>)
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- Eye witness accounts by Sergeant Luther Mesnard of Company D of OH 55th (<http://freepages.military.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~redmurdock/LutherMesnard.html>)
- A film clip "Blue and Gray At 75th Anniversary Of Great Battle, 1938/07/04 (1938)" ([http://archive.org/details/1938-07-04\\_Blue\\_and\\_Gray\\_At\\_75th\\_Anniversary\\_Of\\_Great\\_Battle](http://archive.org/details/1938-07-04_Blue_and_Gray_At_75th_Anniversary_Of_Great_Battle)) is available for free download at the Internet Archive [\[more\]](#)

## Battle of Britain

The **Battle of Britain** (German: *Luftschlacht um England* or *Luftschlacht um Großbritannien*, literally "Air battle for England" or "Air battle for Great Britain") is the name given to the World War II air campaign waged by the German Air Force (*Luftwaffe*) against the United Kingdom during the summer and autumn of 1940. The objective of the campaign was to gain air superiority over the Royal Air Force (RAF), especially Fighter Command. The name derives from a famous speech delivered by Prime Minister Winston Churchill in the House of Commons: "...the Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin."<sup>[1][2]</sup>

The Battle of Britain was the first major campaign to be fought entirely by air forces,<sup>[3]</sup> and was also the largest and most sustained aerial bombing campaign to that date. From July 1940 coastal shipping convoys and shipping centres, such as Portsmouth, were the main targets; one month later the *Luftwaffe* shifted its attacks to RAF airfields and infrastructure. As the battle progressed the *Luftwaffe* also targeted aircraft factories and ground infrastructure. Eventually the *Luftwaffe* resorted to attacking areas of political significance and using terror bombing tactics.<sup>[4]</sup>

The failure of Germany to achieve its objectives of destroying Britain's air defences, or forcing Britain to negotiate an armistice or an outright surrender, is considered its first major defeat and a crucial turning point in World War II.<sup>[5]</sup> By preventing Germany from gaining air superiority, the battle ended the threat that Adolf Hitler would launch Operation Sea Lion, a proposed amphibious and airborne invasion of Britain.

## Background

The early stages of World War II saw successful German invasions on the continent supported by *Luftwaffe* air power able to establish tactical air superiority. In early May 1940 the Norway Debate questioned the fitness for office of the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. On 10 May the Germans invaded France, and on the same day Winston Churchill became British Prime Minister. RAF Fighter Command was desperately short of trained pilots and aircraft, but despite the objections of its commander Hugh Dowding that this left home defences under strength, Churchill sent fighter squadrons to support operations in France,<sup>[6]</sup> where the RAF suffered heavy losses.<sup>[7]</sup> Following the evacuation of British and French soldiers from Dunkirk and the French surrender on 22 June 1940, Adolf Hitler was mainly focused on the possibilities of invading the Soviet Union<sup>[8]</sup> while believing that the British, defeated on the continent and without European allies, would quickly come to terms.<sup>[9]</sup> Although the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, and an element of British public and political sentiment favoured a negotiated peace with an ascendant Germany, Churchill and a majority of his Cabinet refused to consider an armistice with Hitler.<sup>[10]</sup> Instead Churchill used his skilful rhetoric to harden public opinion against capitulation, and to prepare the British for a long war. In his This was their finest hour speech on 18 June 1940, he said "the Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin."<sup>[11]</sup>



British Prime Minister Winston Churchill

After a series of victories, Germany now ruled most of central Europe; from Poland to France, Denmark and Norway. Hitler hoped for a negotiated peace with Britain, but had made no preparations for amphibious assault on a hostile shore: at the time, the only forces with modern equipment and experience were the Japanese at the Battle of Wuhan.<sup>[12]</sup> On 11 July, Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, Commander-in-Chief of the *Kriegsmarine* (German Navy), told Hitler that an invasion could only be contemplated as a last resort, and only after full air superiority had been achieved. The *Kriegsmarine* had been nearly crippled by the Norwegian Campaign, with many of its ships having been sunk or damaged, while the Royal Navy still had over 50 destroyers, 21 cruisers and eight battleships in the British Home Fleet.<sup>[13][14][15]</sup> There was little the weakened *Kriegsmarine* could do to stop the Royal Navy from intervening. The only alternative was to use the *Luftwaffe*'s dive bombers and torpedo bombers, which required air superiority to operate effectively. Grand Admiral Raeder said, "A powerful and effective air force *might* create conditions favourable for an invasion, whether it could was not in the Navy War Staff's province."<sup>[16]</sup>

On 16 July, although he agreed with Raeder, Hitler ordered the preparation of a plan to invade Britain;<sup>[17]</sup> he also hoped that news of the preparations would frighten Britain into peace negotiations. "Directive No. 16; On the Preparation of a Landing Operation against England" read, in part, as follows:

Since England, despite its militarily hopeless situation, still has not shown any signs of being prepared to negotiate, I have decided to prepare a landing operation against England and, if necessary, carry it out. The objective of this operation is to eliminate the English home country as a base for the continuation of the war against Germany...

2) Included in these preparations is the bringing about of those preconditions which make a landing in England possible;

a) *The English air force must have been beaten down to such an extent morally and in fact that it can no longer muster any power of attack worth mentioning against the German crossing.* (italics added)<sup>[18][19][20]</sup>

All preparations were to be made by mid-August. For secrecy, this directive was only issued to Commanders in Chief, but Hermann Göring passed it on to his *Luftwaffe* Air Fleet commanders by coded radio jag rules messages, which were intercepted by Britain's Y-Service and successfully decrypted by Hut 6 at Bletchley Park.<sup>[21]</sup>

The *Kriegsmarine* produced a draft plan for achieving a narrow beachhead near Dover, on 28 July the army responded that they wanted landings all along the South Coast of England. Hitler held a meeting of his army and navy chiefs on 31 July in his Berghof, and on 1 August the OKW (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* or "High Command of the Armed Forces") issued its plan.<sup>[22]</sup> The plan, code named *Unternehmen Seelöwe* ("Operation Sealion"), was scheduled to take place in mid-September 1940. *Seelöwe* called for landings on the south coast of Great Britain, backed by an airborne assault. Neither Hitler nor OKW believed it would be possible to carry out a successful amphibious assault on Britain until the RAF had been neutralised. Raeder believed that air superiority might make a successful landing possible although it would be a risky operation and required "absolute mastery over the Channel by our air forces".<sup>[23]</sup>

Conversely Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz believed air superiority was "not enough". Dönitz stated, "we possessed neither control of the air or the sea; nor were we in any position to gain it".<sup>[24]</sup> Some writers, such as Derek Robinson, have agreed with Dönitz. Robinson argues that the massive superiority of the Royal Navy over the *Kriegsmarine* would have made Sealion a disaster and the *Luftwaffe* could not have prevented decisive intervention by British cruisers and destroyers, even with air superiority.<sup>[25][26]</sup> Williamson Murray argued the task facing the Germans in the summer, 1940 was beyond their capabilities. The three German armed services were not capable of solving the problem of invading the British Isles. Murray contends that the *Kriegsmarine* had been effectively eliminated owing to heavy losses during the Norwegian Campaign.<sup>[27]</sup> Murray states it is doubtful that the *Kriegsmarine* and *Luftwaffe* could have prevented the Royal Navy engaging the invasion fleet.<sup>[28]</sup>

The *Luftwaffe* had not been represented at the Berghof, but Göring was confident that air victory was possible. Like many commanders in other air forces, including the RAF, he was convinced by the ideas of Giulio Douhet that "The bomber will always get through" and if attacks on military targets failed, bombing civilians could force the British

government to surrender.<sup>[29]</sup>

## Opposing forces

Further information: RAF Fighter Command Order of Battle 1940 and Luftwaffe Order of Battle August 1940

The *Luftwaffe* faced a more capable opponent than any it had previously met: a sizeable, highly coordinated, well-supplied, modern air force.

## Fighters

The *Luftwaffe*'s Messerschmitt Bf 109E and Bf 110C squared off against the RAF's workhorse Hurricane Mk I and the less numerous Spitfire Mk I. The Bf 109E had a better climb rate and was 10–30 mph (unknown operator: u'strong'unknown operator: u'strong'unknown operator: u'strong' unknown operator: u'strong' unknown operator: u'strong') faster than the Hurricane Mk II, depending on altitude.<sup>[30]</sup>

In the spring and summer of 1940, RAF fighters benefited from increased availability of 100 octane aviation fuel, which allowed their Merlin engines to generate significantly more power through the use of an Emergency Boost Override.<sup>[31]</sup> In September 1940, the more powerful Mk IIa series 1 Hurricanes started entering service in small numbers.<sup>[32]</sup> This version was capable of a maximum speed of 342 mph (unknown operator: u'strong' km/h), some 25–30 mph (unknown operator: u'strong'unknown operator: u'strong'unknown operator: u'strong' unknown operator: u'strong') more than the Mk I.<sup>[33]</sup>



X4382, a late production Spitfire Mk I of 602 Squadron flown by P/O Osgood Hanbury, Westhampnett, September 1940

The performance of the Spitfire over Dunkirk came as a surprise to the *Jagdwaaffe*, although the German pilots retained a strong belief that the 109 was the superior fighter.<sup>[34]</sup> While the Bf 109E had a much larger turning circle than either the Hurricane or the Spitfire,<sup>[35]</sup> its fuel-injected engine allowed it to dive away from attackers more readily than the carburetted British aircraft. British types were equipped with eight Browning .303 (7.7mm) machine guns, and while most Bf 109Es only had two 7.92mm machine guns, they were supplemented by two 20mm wing cannons. The latter was a much more effective weapon than the British .303s, which were better suited to an earlier era of aerial combat. Many German planes returned to base with large numbers of .303 hits which still had not resulted in the destruction of the aeroplane. The Bf 109E and the Spitfire were superior to each other in key areas; for instance, at some altitudes, the Bf 109 could outclimb the British fighter, and could engage in vertical-plane negative-*g* maneuvers without engine stalling from its DB 601 inverted-V12 powerplant using fuel injection instead of a carburetor, as the Merlin engines in both the Hurricane and Spitfire used. In general, though, as Alfred Price noted in *The Spitfire Story*:

...the differences between the Spitfire and the Me 109 in performance and handling were only marginal, and in a combat they were almost always surmounted by tactical considerations: which side had seen the other first, had the advantage of sun, altitude, numbers, pilot ability, tactical situation, tactical co-ordination, amount of fuel remaining, etc.<sup>[36]</sup>

The Bf 109 was also used as a *Jabo* fighter-bomber—the E-4/B and E-7 models could carry a 250 kg bomb underneath the fuselage. The Bf 109, unlike the *Stuka*, could fight on equal terms with RAF fighters after releasing its ordnance.<sup>[37][38]</sup>

At the start of the battle, the twin-engined Messerschmitt Bf 110 long range *Zerstörer* ("Destroyer") was also expected to engage in air-to-air combat while escorting the *Luftwaffe* bomber fleet. Although the 110 was faster than the Hurricane and almost as fast as the Spitfire, its lack of manoeuvrability and acceleration meant that it was a failure as a long-range escort fighter. On 13 and 15 August, 13 and 30 aircraft were lost, the equivalent of an entire *Gruppe*, and the type's worst losses during the campaign.<sup>[39]</sup> This trend continued with a further eight and fifteen lost

on 16 and 17 August.<sup>[40]</sup> Göring ordered the Bf 110 units to operate "where the range of the single-engined machines were not sufficient".

The most successful role of the Bf 110 during the battle was as a *Schnellbomber* (fast bomber). The Bf 110 usually used a shallow dive to bomb the target and escaped at high speed.<sup>[41][42]</sup> One unit, *Erprobungsgruppe 210*, proved that the Bf 110 could be used to good effect in attacking small or "pinpoint" targets.<sup>[41]</sup>

The RAF's Boulton Paul Defiant had some initial success over Dunkirk<sup>[43]</sup> because of its resemblance to the Hurricane; *Luftwaffe* fighters attacking from the rear were surprised by its unusual gun turret. However, during the Battle of Britain, this single-engined two-seater proved hopelessly outclassed. For various reasons, the Defiant lacked any form of forward-firing armament, and the heavy turret and second crewman meant it could not outrun or outmanoeuvre either the Bf 109 or Bf 110. By the end of August, after disastrous losses, the aircraft was withdrawn from daylight service.<sup>[44][45]</sup>



Messerschmitt Bf 109E-4.

### Fighter formations



Gun camera film shows tracer ammunition from a Supermarine Spitfire Mark I of 609 Squadron, flown by Flight Lieutenant J H G McArthur, hitting a Heinkel He 111 on its starboard quarter. These aircraft were part of a large formation from KG 53 and 55 which attacked the Bristol Aeroplane Company's works at Filton, Bristol, just before midday on 25 September 1940. No. 609 Squadron were based at Middle Wallop, Hampshire.

In the late 1930s, Fighter Command expected to face only bombers over Britain, not single-engined fighters. With this in mind, a series of "Fighting Area Tactics" were formulated and rigidly adhered to, involving a series of manoeuvres designed to concentrate a squadron's firepower to bring down bombers: with no apparent prospect of escorting fighters to worry about, RAF fighter pilots flew in tight, v-shaped sections ("vics") of three. These restricted squadrons to tight 12 aircraft formations composed of four sections in another tight "V". With this formation, only the squadron leader at the front was free to watch for the enemy; the other pilots had to concentrate on keeping station.<sup>[46]</sup> RAF fighter training also emphasised by-the-book attacks by sections breaking away in sequence. Fighter Command recognised the weaknesses of this rigid structure early in the battle, but it was felt too risky to change tactics during the battle, because replacement pilots—often with only minimal flying time—could not be readily retrained,<sup>[47]</sup> and inexperienced RAF pilots needed firm leadership in the air only rigid formations could provide.<sup>[48]</sup> German pilots dubbed the RAF formations *Idiotenreihen* ("rows of idiots") because they left

squadrons vulnerable to attack.<sup>[49][50]</sup>

By contrast the, *Luftwaffe* formations employed a loose section of two (nicknamed the *Rotte*), based on a leader (*Rottenführer*) followed at a distance of about 183 meters (200 yards)<sup>[51]</sup> by his wingman (nicknamed the *Rottenhund* or *Katschmareks*), who also flew slightly higher and was trained to always stay with his leader. While the leader was free to search for enemy aircraft, and could cover his wingman's blind spots, his wingman could concentrate on searching the airspace in the leader's blind spots, behind and below. Attacking aircraft could be sandwiched between the two 109s.<sup>[52] [53]</sup> The *rotte* allowed the *Rottenführer* to concentrate on getting kills although this led to some grievances in the lower ranks because it was felt that the high scores of some *Rottenführer* came at

the expense of the *Katschmareks*. During the Battle of Britain, a pilot who shot down 20 aircraft was automatically awarded the *Ritterkreuz* (Knight's Cross), to which was added *Oak Leaves*, *Swords*, and *Diamonds* for each additional 20 aircraft. Those pilots who appeared to be pursuing these awards were said to be suffering from *Halsweh* (a sore throat), a reference to the convention of wearing the decoration at the neck. Few wingmen in *Luftwaffe* fighter formations were able to shoot down opposing aircraft, while their formation leaders were scoring heavily.<sup>[54]</sup>

Two of these sections were usually teamed up into a *Schwarm*, where all the pilots could watch what was happening around them. Each *Schwarm* in a *Staffel* flew at staggered heights and with 183 meters (200 yards) of room between them, making the formation difficult to spot at longer ranges and allowing for a great deal of flexibility.<sup>[55]</sup> By utilising a tight "cross-over" turn, a *Schwarm* could quickly change direction.<sup>[52]</sup>

The Me 110 fighters adopted the same *Schwarm* formation as the 109s, but were seldom able to use this to the same advantage. When attacked, *Zerstörergruppen* increasingly resorted to forming large "defensive circles". Each Bf 110 guarded the tail of the aircraft ahead of it. Göring ordered that they be renamed "offensive circles" in a vain bid to improve rapidly declining morale.<sup>[56]</sup> These conspicuous formations were often successful in attracting RAF fighters that were sometimes "bounced" by high-flying Bf 109s. This led to the often repeated myth that the Bf 110s were escorted by Bf 109s. The Bf 110's most successful method of attack was the "bounce" from above.

Front line RAF pilots were acutely aware of the inherent deficiencies of their own tactics. A compromise was adopted whereby squadron formations used much looser formations with one or two "weavers" flying independently above and behind to provide increased observation and rear protection; these tended to be the least experienced men and were often the first to be shot down without the other pilots even noticing that they were under attack.<sup>[49][57]</sup> During the battle, 74 Squadron under Squadron Leader Adolph "Sailor" Malan adopted a variation of the German formation called the "fours in line astern", which was a vast improvement on the old three aircraft "vic." Malan's formation was later generally used by Fighter Command.<sup>[58]</sup>

## Bombers

The *Luftwaffe*'s four primary bombers were the Heinkel He 111, Dornier Do 17, and Junkers Ju 88 for level bombing, and the Junkers Ju 87 *Stuka* for diving attacks. The Heinkel He 111 was used in greater numbers than the others during the conflict and is better known, partly due to its distinctive wing shape. Each level bomber also had a few reconnaissance versions that were used during the battle.<sup>[59]</sup>

Although successful in previous *Luftwaffe* engagements, the *Stuka* suffered heavy losses in the Battle of Britain, particularly on 18 August, due to its slow speed and vulnerability to fighter interception after the dive bombing. As a result of the losses and limited payload and range, *Stuka* units were largely removed from operations over England and concentrated on shipping instead until they were re-deployed to the Eastern Front in 1941. They returned on occasion, such as on the 13 September attack on Tangmere airfield.<sup>[60][61][62]</sup>

The remaining three bomber types differed in their capabilities; the Heinkel 111 was the slowest; the Ju 88 was the fastest once its mainly external bomb load was dropped; and the Do 17 had the smallest bomb load.<sup>[59]</sup> All three bomber types suffered heavy losses from British fighters, but the Ju 88 disproportionately so. The German bombers required constant protection by the *Luftwaffe*'s fighter force. There were not enough Bf 109Es to support more than 300–400 bombers on any given day.<sup>[63]</sup> Later in the conflict, when night bombing became more frequent, all three were used. However, due to its reduced bomb load, the lighter Do 17 was used less than the He 111 and Ju 88 for



Heinkel He 111 bombers during the Battle of Britain



this purpose.



On the British side, three bombers were mostly used on night operations against targets such as factories, invasion ports and railway centres; the Armstrong Whitworth Whitley, the Handley-Page Hampden and the Vickers Wellington were classified as heavy bombers by the RAF, although the Hampden was a medium bomber comparable to the He 111. The twin-engined Bristol Blenheim and the obsolescent single-engined Fairey Battle were both light bombers; the Blenheim was the most numerous of the aircraft equipping RAF Bomber Command and was used in attacks against shipping, ports, airfields and factories on the continent by day and by night. The Fairey Battle squadrons, which had suffered heavy losses in daylight attacks

during the Battle of France, were brought up to strength with reserve aircraft and continued to operate at night in attacks against the invasion ports, until the Battle was withdrawn from UK front line service in October 1940.<sup>[65][66]</sup>

## Pilots

Before the war, the RAF's processes for selecting potential candidates was opened to men of all social classes through the creation of the RAF Volunteer Reserve in 1936 which "...was designed to appeal, to...young men...without any class distinctions..."<sup>[67]</sup> The older squadrons of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force did retain some of their upper class exclusiveness<sup>[68]</sup> but their number were soon swamped by the newcomers of the RAFVR and by Sept 1 1939, 6646 pilots had been trained through the RAFVR.<sup>[69]</sup>

By summer 1940, there were about 9,000 pilots in the RAF for approximately 5,000 aircraft, most of which were bombers. Fighter Command was never short of pilots, but the problem of finding sufficient numbers of fully trained fighter pilots became acute by mid-August 1940.<sup>[70]</sup> At all times, new pilots had "almost no chance at all" of surviving their first five sorties because of inexperience, because they received the most-damaged and least-reliable planes, and because they were likely to be their formations' 'tail-end charlie's and thus most vulnerable. For the survivors, the odds of survival rose during the next 15 sorties as their skill and confidence grew. After 20, however, the odds again decreased to zero.<sup>[71]</sup>

With aircraft production running at 300 each week, only 200 pilots were trained in the same period. In addition, more pilots were allocated to squadrons than there were aircraft, as this allowed squadrons to maintain operational strength despite casualties and still provide for pilot leave.<sup>[72]</sup> Another factor was that only about 30% of the 9,000 pilots were assigned to operational squadrons; 20% of the pilots were involved in conducting pilot training, and a further 20% were undergoing further instruction, like those offered in Canada and in Southern Rhodesia to the Commonwealth trainees, although already qualified. The rest were assigned to staff positions, since RAF policy dictated that only pilots could make many staff and operational command decisions, even in engineering matters. At the height of fighting, and despite Churchill's insistence, only 30 pilots were released to the front line from administrative duties.<sup>[73][74]</sup>

For these reasons, and the permanent loss of 435 pilots during Battle of France alone<sup>[7]</sup> with many more wounded, and others lost in Norway, the RAF had fewer experienced pilots at the start of the battle, and it was the lack of trained pilots in the fighting squadrons, rather than the lack of aircraft, that became the greatest concern for Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding, Commander of Fighter Command. Drawing from regular RAF forces and the Auxiliary Air Force and the Volunteer Reserve, the British could muster some 1,103 fighter pilots on 1 July. Replacement pilots, with little flight training and often no gunnery training, suffered high casualty rates.<sup>[49]</sup>

The *Luftwaffe* could muster a larger number (1,450) of more experienced fighter pilots.<sup>[73]</sup> Drawing from a cadre of Spanish Civil War veterans, they had comprehensive courses in aerial gunnery and instructions in tactics suited for fighter-versus-fighter combat.<sup>[55]</sup> Training manuals also discouraged heroism, stressing the utmost importance of

attacking only when the odds were in the pilot's favour. However, German fighter formations did not provide a sufficient reserve of pilots to allow for losses and leave,<sup>[72]</sup> and the *Luftwaffe* was unable to produce enough pilots to prevent a decline in operational strength as the battle progressed.

## International participation

Both sides received significant outside support during the battle.

### Allies

The Royal Air Force roll of honour for the Battle of Britain recognises 595 non-British pilots (out of 2,936) as flying at least one authorised operational sortie with an eligible unit of the RAF or Fleet Air Arm between 10 July and 31 October 1940.<sup>[75]</sup> These included 145 Poles, 127 New Zealanders, 112 Canadians, 88 Czechoslovaks, 32 Australians, 28 Belgians, 25 South Africans, 13 French, 10 Irish, 7 Americans, and one each from Jamaica, the British Mandate of Palestine, and Southern Rhodesia.<sup>[76]</sup> "Altogether in the fighter battles, the bombing raids, and the various patrols flown between 10 July and 31 October 1940 by the Royal Air Force, 1495 aircrew were killed, of whom 449 were fighter pilots, 718 aircrew from Bomber Command, and 280 from Coastal Command. Among those killed were 47 airmen from Canada, 24 from Australia, 17 from South Africa, 35 from Poland, 20 from Czechoslovakia and six from Belgium. Forty-seven New Zealanders lost their lives, including 15 fighter pilots, 24 bomber and eight coastal aircrew. The names of these Allied and Commonwealth airmen are inscribed in a memorial book which rests in the Battle of Britain Chapel in Westminster Abbey. In the chapel is a stained glass window which contains the badges of the fighter squadrons which operated during the battle and the flags of the nations to which the pilots and aircrew belonged."<sup>[77]</sup>



126 German aircraft or "Adolfs" were claimed by Polish pilots of 303 Squadron during the Battle.

### Axis

An element of the Italian Royal Air Force (*Regia Aeronautica*) called the Italian Air Corps (*Corpo Aereo Italiano* or CAI) first saw action in late October 1940. It took part in the latter stages of the battle, but achieved limited success. The unit was redeployed in early 1941.

## *Luftwaffe* strategy

The *Luftwaffe* was devised to provide tactical support for the army on the battlefield. During the *blitzkrieg* offensives against Poland, Denmark and Norway and France and the Low Countries, the *Luftwaffe* had co-operated fully with the *Wehrmacht*. For the Battle of Britain however, the *Luftwaffe* had to operate in a strategic role, something for which it was unsuited. Its main task was to ensure air supremacy over southeast England, to pave the way for an invasion fleet.

The *Luftwaffe* regrouped after the Battle of France into three *Luftflotten* (Air Fleets) on Britain's southern and northern flanks. *Luftflotte 2*, commanded by *Generalfeldmarschall* Albert Kesselring, was responsible for the bombing of southeast England and the London area. *Luftflotte 3*, under *Generalfeldmarschall* Hugo Sperrle, targeted the West Country, Wales, the Midlands, and northwest England. *Luftflotte 5*, led by *Generaloberst* Hans-Jürgen Stumpff from his headquarters in Norway, targeted the north of England and Scotland. As the battle progressed, command responsibility shifted, with *Luftflotte 3* taking more responsibility for the night-time *Blitz* attacks while the main daylight operations fell upon *Luftflotte 2*'s shoulders.

Initial *Luftwaffe* estimates were that it would take four days to defeat the RAF Fighter Command in southern England. This would be followed by a four-week offensive during which the bombers and long-range fighters would destroy all military installations throughout the country and wreck the British aircraft industry. The campaign was planned to begin with attacks on airfields near the coast, gradually moving inland to attack the ring of sector airfields defending London. Later reassessments gave the *Luftwaffe* five weeks, from 8 August to 15 September, to establish temporary air superiority over England.<sup>[78]</sup> To achieve this goal, Fighter Command had to be destroyed, either on the ground or in the air, yet the *Luftwaffe* had to be able to preserve its own strength to be able to support the invasion; this meant that the *Luftwaffe* had to maintain a high "kill ratio" over the RAF fighters. The only alternative to the goal of air superiority was a terror bombing campaign aimed at the civilian population, but this was considered a last resort and it was (at this stage of the battle) expressly forbidden by Hitler.<sup>[78]</sup>

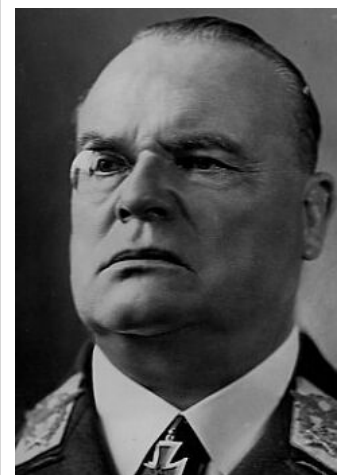
The *Luftwaffe* kept broadly to this scheme, but its commanders had differences of opinion on strategy. Sperrle wanted to eradicate the air defence infrastructure by bombing it. His counterpart, Kesselring, championed attacking London directly—either to bombard the British government into submission or to draw RAF fighters into a decisive battle. Göring did nothing to resolve this disagreement between his commanders, and only vague directives were set down during the initial stages of the battle, with Göring seemingly unable to decide upon which strategy to pursue.<sup>[79]</sup> He seemed at times obsessed with maintaining his own power base in the *Luftwaffe* and indulging his outdated beliefs on air fighting, which were later to lead to tactical and strategic errors.

## Tactics

*Luftwaffe* tactics were influenced by their fighters. The Bf 110 proved too vulnerable to the nimble single-engined RAF fighters. This meant the bulk of fighter escort duties fell on the Bf 109. Fighter tactics were then complicated by bomber crews who demanded closer protection. After the hard-fought battles of 15 and 18 August, Göring met with his unit leaders. During this conference, the need for the fighters to meet up on time with the bombers was stressed. It was also decided that one bomber *Gruppe* could only be properly protected by several *Gruppen* of 109s.



Hermann Göring, the commander of the *Luftwaffe*



Hugo Sperrle, the commander of *Luftflotte 3*.

In addition Göring stipulated that as many fighters as possible were to be left free for *Freie Jagd* ("Free Hunts": a free-roving fighter sweep preceded a raid to try to sweep defenders out of the raid's path). The Ju 87 units, which had suffered heavy casualties, were only to be used under favourable circumstances.<sup>[80]</sup> In early September, due to increasing complaints from the bomber crews about RAF fighters seemingly able to get through the escort screen, Göring ordered an increase in close escort duties. This decision shackled many of the Bf 109s to the bombers and, although they were more successful at protecting the bomber forces, casualties amongst the fighters mounted primarily because they were forced to fly and manoeuvre at reduced speeds.<sup>[81]</sup>

The *Luftwaffe* consistently varied its tactics in its attempts to break through the RAF defences. It launched many *Freie Jagd* to draw up RAF fighters. RAF fighter controllers, however, were often able to detect these and position squadrons to avoid them, keeping to Dowding's plan to preserve fighter strength for the bomber formations. The *Luftwaffe* also tried using small formations of bombers as bait, covering them with large numbers of escorts. This was more successful, but escort duty tied the fighters to the bombers' slow speed and made them more vulnerable.



Pattern of condensation trails left by British and German aircraft after a dogfight.

By September, standard tactics for raids had become an amalgam of techniques. A *Freie Jagd* would precede the main attack formations. The bombers would fly in at altitudes between 16000 feet (**unknown operator: u'strong' m**) and 20000 feet (**unknown operator: u'strong' m**), closely escorted by fighters. Escorts were divided into two parts (usually *Gruppen*), some operating in close contact with the bombers, and others a few hundred yards away and a little above. If the formation was attacked from the starboard, the starboard section engaged the attackers, the top section moving to starboard and the port section to the top position. If the attack came from the port side the system was reversed. British fighters coming from the rear were

engaged by the rear section and the two outside sections similarly moving to the rear. If the threat came from above, the top section went into action while the side sections gained height to be able to follow RAF fighters down as they broke away. If attacked, all sections flew in defensive circles. These tactics were skilfully evolved and carried out, and were extremely difficult to counter.<sup>[82]</sup>

Adolf Galland noted:

We had the impression that, whatever we did, we were bound to be wrong. Fighter protection for bombers created many problems which had to be solved in action. Bomber pilots preferred close screening in which their formation was surrounded by pairs of fighters pursuing a zigzag course. Obviously, the visible presence of the protective fighters gave the bomber pilots a greater sense of security. However, this was a faulty conclusion, because a fighter can only carry out this purely defensive task by taking the initiative in the offensive. He must never wait until attacked because he then loses the chance of acting.

We fighter pilots certainly preferred the free chase during the approach and over the target area. This gives the greatest relief and the best protection for the bomber force.<sup>[83]</sup>

The biggest disadvantage faced by Bf 109 pilots was that without the benefit of long-range drop tanks (which were introduced in limited numbers in the late stages of the battle), usually of 300 litres (**unknown operator: u'strong' imp gal; unknown operator: u'strong' US gal**) capacity, the 109s had



Adolf Galland, the successful leader of III./JG 26, became *Geschwaderkommodore* of JG 26 on 22 August.

an endurance of just over an hour and, for the 109E, a 600 km (360 mi) range. Once over Britain, a 109 pilot had to keep an eye on a red "low fuel" light on the instrument panel: once this was illuminated, he was forced to turn back and head for France. With the prospect of two long flights over water, and knowing their range was substantially reduced when escorting bombers or during combat, the *Jagdflieger* coined the term *Kanalkrankheit* or "Channel sickness".<sup>[84]</sup>

## Intelligence

The *Luftwaffe* was ill-served by its lack of military intelligence about the British defences.<sup>[85]</sup> The German intelligence services were fractured and plagued by rivalries; their performance was "amateurish".<sup>[86]</sup> By 1940, there were few German agents operating in Great Britain and a handful of bungled attempts to insert spies into the country were foiled.<sup>[87]</sup>

As a result of intercepted radio transmissions, the Germans began to realise that the RAF fighters were being controlled from ground facilities; in July and August 1939, for example, the airship *Graf Zeppelin*, which was packed with equipment for listening in on RAF radio and RDF transmissions, flew around the coasts of Britain. Although the *Luftwaffe* correctly interpreted these new ground control procedures, they were incorrectly assessed as being rigid and ineffectual. A British radar system was well known to the *Luftwaffe* from intelligence gathered before the war, but the highly developed "Dowding system" linked with fighter control had been a well-kept secret.<sup>[88][89]</sup> Even when good information existed, such as a November 1939 *Abwehr* assessment of Fighter Command strengths and capabilities by *Abteilung V*, it was ignored if it did not match conventional preconceptions.

On 16 July 1940, *Abteilung V*, commanded by *Oberstleutnant* "Beppo" Schmid, produced a report on the RAF and on Britain's defensive capabilities which was adopted by the frontline commanders as a basis for their operational plans. One of the most conspicuous failures of the report was the lack of information on the RAF's RDF network and control systems capabilities; it was assumed that the system was rigid and inflexible, with the RAF fighters being "tied" to their home bases.<sup>[90][91]</sup> An optimistic and, as it turned out, erroneous conclusion reached was:

**D. Supply Situation...** At present the British aircraft industry produces about 180 to 300 first line fighters and 140 first line bombers a month. In view of the present conditions relating to production (the appearance of raw material difficulties, the disruption or breakdown of production at factories owing to air attacks, the increased vulnerability to air attack owing to the fundamental reorganization of the aircraft industry now in progress), it is believed that for the time being output will decrease rather than increase.

In the event of an intensification of air warfare it is expected that the present strength of the RAF will fall, and this decline will be aggravated by the continued decrease in production.<sup>[91]</sup>

Because of this statement, reinforced by another more detailed report, issued on 10 August, there was a mindset in the ranks of the *Luftwaffe* that the RAF would run out of frontline fighters.<sup>[90]</sup> The *Luftwaffe* believed it was weakening Fighter Command at three times the actual attrition rate.<sup>[92]</sup> Many times, the leadership believed Fighter Command's strength had collapsed, only to discover that the RAF were able to send up defensive formations at will.

Throughout the battle, the *Luftwaffe* had to use numerous reconnaissance sorties to make up for the poor intelligence. Reconnaissance aircraft (initially mostly Dornier Do 17s, but increasingly Bf 110s) proved easy prey for British fighters, as it was seldom possible for them to be escorted by Bf 109s. Thus, the *Luftwaffe* operated "blind" for much of the battle, unsure of its enemy's true strengths, capabilities, and deployments. Many of the Fighter Command airfields were never attacked, while raids against supposed fighter airfields fell instead on bomber or coastal defence stations. The results of bombing and air fighting were consistently exaggerated, due to inaccurate claims, over-enthusiastic reports and the difficulty of confirmation over enemy territory. In the euphoric atmosphere of perceived victory, the *Luftwaffe* leadership became increasingly disconnected from reality. This lack of leadership and solid intelligence meant the Germans did not adopt consistent strategy, even when the RAF had its back to the wall. Moreover, there was never a systematic focus on one type of target (such as airbases, radar stations, or aircraft factories); consequently, the already haphazard effort was further diluted.<sup>[93]</sup>



## Navigational aids

While the British were using radar for air defence more effectively than the Germans realised, the *Luftwaffe* attempted to press its own offensive with advanced radio navigation systems of which the British were initially not aware. One of these was *Knickebein* ("crooked leg"); this system was used at night and for raids where precision was required. It was rarely used during the Battle of Britain (see Reginald Victor Jones and Battle of the Beams).<sup>[94]</sup>

## Air-sea rescue

The *Luftwaffe* was much better prepared for the task of air-sea rescue than the RAF, specifically tasking the *Seenotdienst* unit, equipped with Heinkel He 59 floatplanes, with picking up downed aircrew from the North Sea, English Channel and the Dover Straits. In addition, *Luftwaffe* aircraft were equipped with life rafts and the aircrew were provided with sachets of a chemical called fluorescein which, on reacting with water, created a large, easy-to-see, bright green patch.<sup>[95]</sup>

In accordance with the Geneva Convention, the He 59s were unarmed and painted white with civilian registration markings and red crosses. Nevertheless, RAF aircraft attacked these aircraft, as some were escorted by Bf 109s.<sup>[96]</sup>

After single He 59s were forced to land on the sea by RAF fighters, on 1 and 9 July respectively,<sup>[96][97]</sup> a controversial order was issued to the RAF on 13 July; this stated that as of 20 July, *Seenotdienst* aircraft were to be shot down. One of the reasons given by Churchill was:

We did not recognise this means of rescuing enemy pilots so they could come and bomb our civil population again... all German air ambulances were forced down or shot down by our fighters on definite orders approved by the War Cabinet.<sup>[98]</sup>

The Air Ministry issuing a communiqué to the German government on 14 July:

It has come to the notice of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom that enemy aircraft in civilian markings and marked with the red cross have recently flown over British Ships at sea and near the British coast, and that they are being employed for purposes which His Majesty's Government cannot regard as being consistent with the privileges generally accorded to the Red Cross.

His Majesty's Government desire to accord to ambulance aircraft reasonable facilities for the transportation of the sick and wounded, in accordance with Red Cross Convention, and aircraft engaged in the direct evacuation of sick and wounded will be respected, provided that they comply with the relevant provisions of the Geneva Convention.

His Majesty's Government are unable, however, to grant immunity to such aircraft flying over areas in which operations are in progress on land or at sea, or approaching British or Allied territory, or territory in British occupation, or British or Allied ships.

Ambulance aircraft which do not comply with the above will do so at their own risk and peril.<sup>[99]</sup>

The white He 59s were soon repainted in camouflage colours and armed with defensive machine guns. Although another four He 59s were shot down by RAF aircraft,<sup>[100]</sup> the *Seenotdienst* continued to pick up downed *Luftwaffe* and Allied aircrew throughout the battle, earning praise from Adolf Galland for their gallantry.<sup>[101]</sup>

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## RAF strategy

### The Dowding System

Further information: RAF Fighter Command Order of Battle 1940

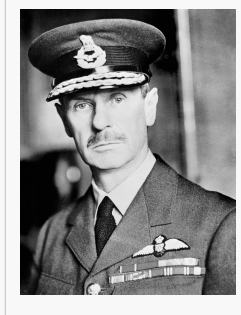
Further information: List of officially accredited Battle of Britain squadrons

The keystone of the British defence was the complex infrastructure of detection, command, and control that ran the battle. This was the "*Dowding System*", after its chief architect, Air Chief Marshal Sir H.C.T. "Stuffy" Dowding, and the leader of RAF Fighter Command. Much of the air defence system had been originally set up from 1917 by Major General E B Ashmore. Dowding built upon and modernised many of the features of this system,<sup>[102]</sup> including the use of two-way radio and the Royal Observer Corps (ROC).<sup>[103]</sup> However, the core of Dowding's system was implemented by Dowding himself: the use of Radio Direction Finding (RDF, later called radar, for **radio detection and ranging**)<sup>[104]</sup> was at his behest, and its use, supplemented by information by the ROC, was crucial to the RAF's ability to efficiently intercept incoming German aircraft.<sup>[105]</sup> He also insisted on having the radar operators linked via telephone (whose wires were laid deep underground with concrete anti-bomb protection)<sup>[106]</sup> to an operational centre: Fighter Command control at Bentley Priory.<sup>[107]</sup> During the battle, several Coastal Command and Fleet Air Arm units came under Fighter Command control.

### Groups

The British airspace was divided up into four Groups.

- 10 Group defended Wales and the West Country and was commanded by Air Vice-Marshal Sir Quintin Brand.
- 11 Group covered the southeast of England and the critical approaches to London and was commanded by New Zealander Air Vice-Marshal Keith Park from the No. 11 Group Fighter Command Operations Room in the underground bunker at RAF Uxbridge, now known as the Battle of Britain Bunker.
- 12 Group defended the Midlands and East Anglia and was led by Air Vice-Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory.
- 13 Group covered the north of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland and was commanded by Air Vice-Marshal Richard Saul.



Commander-in-Chief, Air Chief Marshal Sir  
Hugh Dowding



10 Group Commander, Sir  
Quintin Brand



11 Group Commander, Keith Park in front of his Hurricane OK-2  
on Malta in 1942



12 Group Commander, Trafford  
Leigh-Mallory



### 13 Group Commander, Richard Saul

#### Control systems

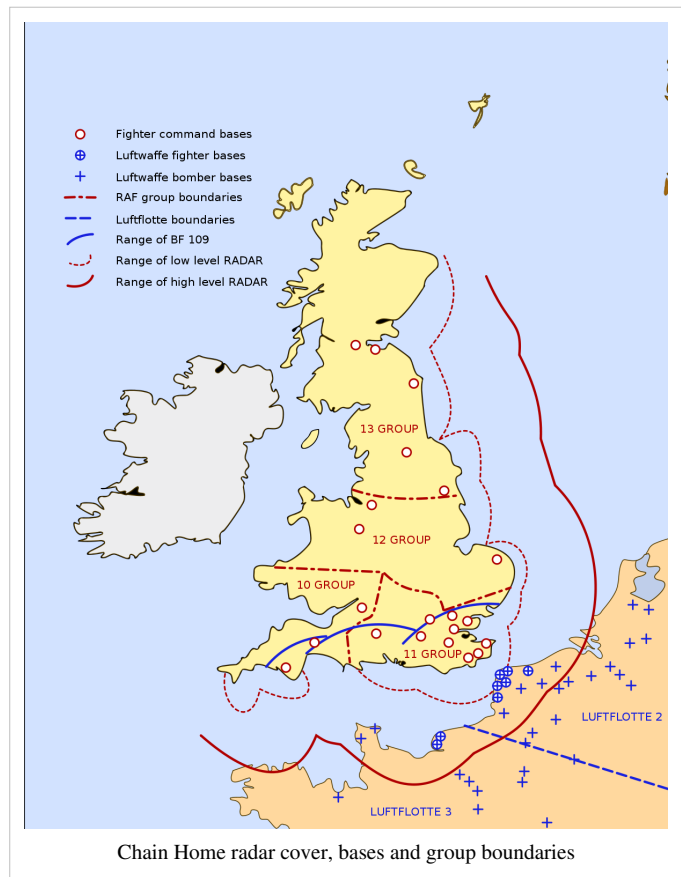
Usually the first indications of incoming air raids were received by the Chain Home Radio Direction Finding (RDF) facilities which were located around the coastlines of Great Britain. In most circumstances, RDF could pick up formations of *Luftwaffe* aircraft as they organised over their own airfields. Once the raiding aircraft moved inland over England, the formations were also plotted by the Observer Corps. The information from RDF and the Observer Corps were sent through to the main operations room of Fighter Command Headquarters at Bentley Priory. The plots were assessed to determine whether they were "hostile" or "friendly". If hostile, the information was sent to the main "operations room", which was in a large underground bunker.

Here the course information of each raid was plotted by WAAFs who received information by a telephone system. Additional intelligence was provided by the "Y" Service radio posts, which monitored enemy radio transmissions, and the "Ultra" decoding centre based at Bletchley Park.

Colour coded counters representing each raid were placed on a large table, which had a map of Britain overlaid and squared off with a British Modified Grid. The colour of counter to use for a new sighting was determined by the time of the sighting, the proper colour being indicated by the minute hand of the sector clock. As the plots of the raiding aircraft moved, the counters were pushed across the map by magnetic "rakes". This system enabled the main "Fighter Controller" (usually of squadron leader rank) and Dowding to see quickly where each formation was heading and allowed an estimate to be made of possible targets. The age of the information was readily apparent from the colour of the counter. Because of the simplicity of the system, decisions could be made quickly and easily.

Apart from the controller, most of the room and map information was operated by members of the WAAF. Before the war, there was still a great deal of doubt about the ability of women to stand up to battle conditions, with many airwomen employed on front-line RDF stations and aerodromes.<sup>[108]</sup> Experience during the battle proved that such doubts were unfounded and the contribution of the WAAFs became essential to the RAF in its control and communications systems and in many other duties.<sup>[109][110][111]</sup>

This information was simultaneously sent to the headquarters of each Group (for example, RAF Uxbridge for 11 Group),<sup>[112]</sup> where it was "filtered" through a filter room (that is, collated, cross-checked and simplified), before being sent through to another operations room, housed in the Battle of Britain Bunker. Because Group had tactical control of the battle, the operations room was different in layout from the one at Bentley Priory. The main map on the plotting table represented the Group command area and its associated airfields. Extensive radio and telephone equipment transmitted and received a constant flow of information from the various sector airfields as well as the Observer Corps, AA Command and the navy. The "Duty fighter controller" was (for example in 11 Group) Park's



personal representative, whose job was to control how and when each raid would be dealt with. He ordered the squadrons airborne and positioned them as he thought best. Timing was of the essence, because "(e)ach minute of unnecessary delay waiting to make absolutely sure that the raid was coming in meant about 2,000 feet of vital altitude our fighters would not have when they met the enemy." (Wing Commander Lord Willoughby de Broke, Senior Fighter Controller, Uxbridge.)

Each Group room had a "tote board" which showed each squadron available to that group. The tote board had a system of lights which enabled the controllers to see the squadron status: *Released* (not available); *Available* (airborne in 20 minutes); *Readiness* (airborne in 5 minutes); *Standby* (pilots in cockpit, airborne in 2 minutes); *Airborne and moving into position*; *Enemy sighted*; *Ordered to land*; *Landed and refuelling/rearming*. Next to the tote board, where it could be clearly seen, was a weather board which showed the state of the weather around each airfield. It was the responsibility of the WAAF plotters to continually update the tote and weather boards.<sup>[113][114]</sup>

A vital role was played by the telephone engineers of the GPO "who worked all hours repairing communications, installing completely new facilities in the emergency centres, and keeping the nervous system of Fighter Command functioning..." (Air Commodore Eric Roberts, Commander Middle Wallop Sector in 1940)<sup>[115]</sup>

Despite appearances, the Groups were not mutually supporting; Park, for instance, could only request – not demand – assistance from Brand (who usually co-operated), or from Leigh-Mallory (who often prevaricated). This was because Dowding had never issued standing orders to assist, nor had he created a method to co-ordinate it.<sup>[93]</sup>

There was a further problem in that the aircraft were not assigned equitably between Groups. While the most effective RAF fighter was the Spitfire, 70% of 11 Group aircraft were Hurricanes. "In total, less than a third of Britain's best fighters were operating in the key sector."<sup>[116]</sup>

## Sectors

The Group areas were subdivided into Sectors; each commanding officer was assigned between two and four squadrons. Sector Stations, comprising an aerodrome with a "Sector operations room", were the heart of this organisation, and they were also responsible for operating satellite aerodromes to which squadrons could be dispersed. The operations rooms duplicated those at the Group HQs, although they were on a smaller scale and most were still housed in brick, single-storey, tile-roofed structures above ground, where they were vulnerable to attack. By 1940, most were semi-protected by an earth bank or "blast wall" surrounding them which reached as high as the eaves. Fortunately for Fighter Command, *Luftwaffe* Intelligence was unaware of the importance of these rooms and most were left alone. The control rooms at Biggin Hill were destroyed by a raid on 31 August, but this was due to a chance bomb hit. Their vulnerability in time of war was appreciated and new airfields built during the expansion programme of the 1930s had new, bombproof Mk II, L-shaped structures. As a further precaution, emergency control rooms were set up in different locations away from the airfields, with small loss in efficiency; RAF Kenley, for example, could use an alternative room housed in a butcher's shop in nearby Caterham. The plotting table was laid out with a map of the sector and its airfields, and the tote and weather boards reflected this more localised information.<sup>[114]</sup>



The restored 12 Group Sector operations room at Duxford.

When ordered by their Group HQ, the sector stations would "scramble" their squadrons into the air. Once airborne, the squadrons would be directed by radio-telephone (R/T) from their sector station. Squadrons could be ordered to patrol airfields or vital targets or be "vectored" to intercept incoming raids. As well as directing the fighter squadrons, Sector stations also controlled the anti-aircraft batteries in their area; an army officer sat beside each fighter controller and directed the gun crews when to open fire and, if RAF aircraft flew into the gun-zones, ordered the guns to cease fire.<sup>[117]</sup>



### Limitations

Though it was the most sophisticated air defence system in the world at that time, the Dowding System had many limitations, including, but not often stressed, its emphatic need for qualified ground maintenance personnel, many of whom had received their training under the Aircraft Apprentice scheme instituted by Hugh Trenchard. RDF (radar) was subject to significant errors and the Observer Corps had difficulties tracking raids at night and in bad weather. R/T (radio telephone) communications with airborne fighters were restricted because the standard radio set used by RAF fighters at the beginning of the battle was the TR9D HF set, which operated over two selectable frequencies in the band 4.3–6.6 Megahertz (MHz);<sup>[118]</sup> the RAF soon realised that this equipment was limited in the range at which it could receive and transmit radio signals because of its limited power. In addition, the increase in the number of civil, military and foreign HF-band radio transmitters since the adoption of the TR9 meant that the signal often suffered from distortion and interference, making clear communication with the RAF fighters difficult. It was also restricted to a single frequency per squadron, making inter-squadron communication impossible.<sup>[115]</sup> Finally, the system for tracking RAF fighters, known as HF/DF or "Huff-Duff", restricted sectors to a maximum of four squadrons in the air. The addition of IFF, "Pipsqueak", while a welcome help in identifying RAF aircraft, took up another radio channel.

In late September 1940, VHF T/R Type 1133 radios started replacing the TR9s. These had first been fitted to Spitfires of 54 and 66 Squadrons starting in October 1939,<sup>[115]</sup> but production delays with the improved T/R 1143 set meant the bulk of Spitfires and Hurricanes were not fitted with this equipment until October 1940. The reception was much clearer over a longer range, and controllers and pilots had a wider range of communications channels to choose from.<sup>[115][118]</sup>

### Effect of signals intelligence

It is unclear how much the British intercepts of the Enigma cipher, used for high-security German radio communications, affected the battle. Ultra, the information obtained from Enigma intercepts, gave the highest echelons of the British command a view of German intentions. According to F. W. Winterbotham, who was the senior Air Staff representative in the Secret Intelligence Service,<sup>[119]</sup> Ultra helped establish the strength and composition of the *Luftwaffe's* formations, the aims of the commanders<sup>[120]</sup> and provided early warning of some raids.<sup>[121]</sup> In early August it was decided that a small unit would be set up at Fighter Command headquarters (Stanmore), which would process the flow of information from Bletchley and provide Dowding only with the most essential Ultra material; thus the Air Ministry did not have to send a continual flow of information to Stanmore, preserving secrecy, and Dowding was not inundated with non-essential information. Keith Park and his controllers were also told about Ultra.<sup>[122]</sup> In a further attempt to camouflage the existence of Ultra Dowding created a unit called 421 Flight. This unit (which later became 91 Squadron), was equipped with Hurricanes and Spitfires and sent out aircraft to search for and report *Luftwaffe* formations approaching England.<sup>[123]</sup> In addition the radio listening service (known as Y Service), monitoring the patterns of *Luftwaffe* radio traffic, contributed considerably to the early warning of raids.

### Air-sea rescue

One of the biggest oversights of the entire system was the lack of a proper air-sea rescue organisation. The RAF had started organising a system in 1940 with High Speed Launches (HSLs) based on flying boat bases and at a number of overseas locations, but it was still believed that the amount of cross-Channel traffic meant that there was no need for a rescue service to cover these areas. Downed pilots and aircrew, it was hoped, would be picked up by any boats or ships which happened to be passing by. Otherwise the local life boat would be alerted, assuming someone had seen the pilot going into the water.<sup>[124]</sup>

RAF aircrew were issued with a life jacket, nicknamed the "Mae West" but in 1940 it still required manual inflation, which was almost impossible for someone who was injured or in shock. The waters of the English Channel and

Dover Straits are cold, even in the middle of summer, and clothing issued to RAF aircrew did little to insulate them against these freezing conditions. A conference in 1939 had placed air-sea rescue under Coastal Command. Because a number of pilots had been lost at sea during the "Channel Battle", on 22 August, control of RAF rescue launches was passed to the local naval authorities and 12 Lysanders were given to Fighter Command to help look for pilots at sea. In all some 200 pilots and aircrew were lost at sea during the battle. No proper air-sea rescue service was formed until 1941.<sup>[85]</sup>

## Tactics

The weight of the battle fell upon 11 Group. Keith Park's tactics were to dispatch individual squadrons to intercept raids. The intention was to subject incoming bombers to continual attacks by relatively small numbers of fighters and try to break up the tight German formations. Once formations had fallen apart, stragglers could be picked off one by one. Where multiple squadrons reached a raid the procedure was for the slower Hurricanes to tackle the bombers while the more agile Spitfires held up the fighter escort. This ideal was not always achieved, resulting in occasions when Spitfires and Hurricanes reversed roles.<sup>[125]</sup> Park also issued instructions to his units to engage in frontal attacks against the bombers, which were more vulnerable to such attacks. Again, in the environment of fast moving, three-dimensional air battles, few RAF fighter units were able to attack the bombers from head-on.<sup>[125]</sup>



X4474, a late production Mk I Spitfire of 19 Squadron, September 1940. During the Battle 19 Squadron was part of the Duxford Wing.

During the battle, some commanders, notably Leigh-Mallory, proposed squadrons be formed into "Big Wings," consisting of at least three squadrons, to attack the enemy *en masse*, a method pioneered by Douglas Bader.

Proponents of this tactic claimed interceptions in large numbers caused greater enemy losses while reducing their own casualties. Opponents pointed out the big wings would take too long to form up, and the strategy ran a greater risk of fighters being caught on the ground refuelling. The big wing idea also caused pilots to overclaim their kills, due to the confusion of a more intense battle zone. This led to the belief big wings were far more effective than they were.<sup>[126]</sup>

The issue caused intense friction between Park and Leigh-Mallory, as 12 Group was tasked with protecting 11 Group's airfields whilst Park's squadrons intercepted incoming raids. However, the delay in forming up Big Wings meant the formations often did not arrive at all or until after German bombers had hit 11 Group's airfields.<sup>[127]</sup> Dowding, to highlight the problem of the Big Wing's performance, submitted a report compiled by Park to the Air Ministry on 15 November. In the report, he highlighted that during the period of 11 September – 31 October, the extensive use of the Big Wing had resulted in just 10 interceptions and one German aircraft destroyed, but his report was ignored.<sup>[128]</sup> Post-war analysis agrees Dowding and Park's approach was best for 11 Group.

Dowding's removal from his post in November 1940 has been blamed on this struggle between Park and Leigh-Mallory's daylight strategy. However, the intensive raids and destruction wrought during the Blitz damaged both Dowding and Park in particular, for the failure to produce an effective night-fighter defence system, something for which the influential Leigh-Mallory had long criticised them.<sup>[129]</sup>

## Bomber and Coastal Command contributions

Bomber Command and Coastal Command aircraft flew offensive sorties against targets in Germany and France during the battle. After the initial disasters of the war, with Vickers Wellington bombers shot down in large numbers attacking Wilhelmshaven and the slaughter of the Fairey Battle squadrons sent to France, it became clear that Bomber Command would have to operate mainly at night to achieve any results without incurring very high losses.<sup>[130]</sup> From 15 May 1940, a night time bomber campaign was launched against the German oil industry, communications, and forests/crops, mainly in the Ruhr area.

As the threat mounted, Bomber Command changed targeting priority on 3 June 1940 to attack the German aircraft industry. On 4 July, the Air Ministry gave Bomber Command orders to attack ports and shipping. By September, the build-up of invasion barges in the Channel ports had become a top priority target.<sup>[131]</sup> On 7 September, the government issued a warning that the invasion could be expected within the next few days and, that night, Bomber Command attacked the Channel ports and supply dumps. On 13 September, they carried out another large raid on the Channel ports, sinking 80 large barges in the port of Ostend.<sup>[132]</sup> 84 barges were sunk in Dunkirk after another raid on 17 September and by 19 September, almost 200 barges had been sunk.<sup>[131]</sup> The loss of these barges may have contributed to Hitler's decision to postpone Operation Sealion indefinitely.<sup>[131]</sup> The success of these raids was in part because the Germans had few Freya radar stations set up in France, so that air defences of the French harbours were not nearly as good as the air defences over Germany; Bomber Command had directed some 60% of its strength against the Channel ports.

The Bristol Blenheim units also raided German-occupied airfields throughout July to December 1940, both during daylight hours and at night. Although most of these raids were unproductive, there were some successes; on 1 August, five out of 12 Blenheims sent to attack Haamstede and Evere (Brussels) were able to bomb, destroying or heavily damaging three Bf 109s of II./JG 27 and apparently killing a *Staffelkapitän* identified as a *Hauptmann* Albrecht von Ankum-Frank. Two other 109s were claimed by Blenheim gunners.<sup>[133][134]</sup> Another successful raid on Haamstede was made by a single Blenheim on 7 August which destroyed one 109 of 4./JG 54, heavily damaged another and caused lighter damage to four more.<sup>[135]</sup>

There were some missions which produced an almost 100% casualty rate amongst the Blenheims; one such operation was mounted on 13 August 1940 against a *Luftwaffe* airfield near Aalborg in north-eastern Denmark by 12 aircraft of 82 Squadron. One Blenheim returned early (the pilot was later charged and due to appear before a court martial, but was killed on another operation), the other 11, which reached Denmark, were shot down, five by flak and six by Bf 109s. Of the 33 crewmen who took part in the attack, 20 were killed and 13 captured.<sup>[136]</sup>

As well as the bombing operations, Blenheim-equipped units had been formed to carry out long-range strategic reconnaissance missions over Germany and German-occupied territories. In this role, the Blenheims again proved to be too slow and vulnerable against *Luftwaffe* fighters, and they took constant casualties.<sup>[137]</sup>

Coastal Command directed its attention towards the protection of British shipping, and the destruction of enemy shipping. As invasion became more likely, it participated in the strikes on French harbours and airfields, laying mines, and mounting numerous reconnaissance missions over the enemy-held coast. In all, some 9,180 sorties were flown by bombers from July to October 1940. Although this was much less than the 80,000 sorties flown by fighters, bomber crews suffered about half the total number of casualties borne by their fighter colleagues. The bomber contribution was, therefore, much more dangerous on a loss-per-sortie comparison.<sup>[138]</sup>

Bomber, reconnaissance, and antisubmarine patrol operations continued throughout these months with little respite and none of the publicity accorded to Fighter Command. In his famous 20 August speech about "The Few", praising Fighter Command, Churchill also made a point of mentioning Bomber Command's contribution, adding that



A Bristol Blenheim Mk IV of 21 Squadron. The Blenheim bomber units of Bomber and Coastal Commands bore heavy casualties while undertaking a number of tasks during the Battle.

bombers were even then striking back at Germany; this part of the speech is often overlooked, even today.<sup>[139][140]</sup> The Battle of Britain Chapel in Westminster Abbey lists in a Roll of Honour, 718 Bomber Command crew members, and 280 from Coastal Command who were killed between 10 July and 31 October.<sup>[141]</sup>

## Phases of the battle

The Battle can be roughly divided into four phases:

- 10 July – 11 August: *Kanalkampf*, ("the Channel battles").
- 12 August – 23 August: *Adlerangriff* ("Eagle Attack"), the early assault against the coastal airfields.
- 24 August – 6 September: the *Luftwaffe* targets the airfields. The critical phase of the battle.
- 7 September onwards: the day attacks switch to British towns and cities.



German Heinkel He 111 bombers over the English Channel 1940

## Channel battles



A pair of 264 Squadron Defiants (PS-V was shot down on 28 August 1940 over Kent by Bf 109s.)

The *Kanalkampf* comprised a series of running fights over convoys in the English Channel. It was launched partly because Kesselring and Sperrle were not sure about what else to do, and partly because it gave German aircrews some training and a chance to probe the British defences.<sup>[79]</sup> Dowding could only provide minimal shipping protection, and these battles off the coast tended to favour the Germans, whose bomber escorts had the advantage of altitude and outnumbered the RAF fighters. From 9 July reconnaissance probing by Dornier Do 17 bombers put a severe strain on RAF pilots and machines, with high RAF losses to Bf 109s. When nine 141 Squadron Defiants went into action on 19 July six were lost to Bf 109s before a

squadron of Hurricanes intervened. On 25 July a coal convoy and escorting destroyers suffered such heavy losses to attacks by Stuka dive bombers that the British Admiralty decided convoys should travel at night: the RAF shot down 16 raiders but lost 7 aircraft. By 8 August, 18 coal ships and 4 destroyers had been sunk, but the Navy was determined to send a convoy of 20 ships through rather than move the coal by railway. After repeated Stuka attacks that day, six ships were badly damaged, four were sunk and only four reached their destination. The RAF lost 19 fighters and shot down 31 German aircraft. The Navy now cancelled all further convoys through the Channel and sent the cargo by rail. However, these early combat encounters provided both sides with experience.<sup>[142]</sup>

## Main assault

The main attack upon the RAF's defences was code-named *Adlerangriff* ("Eagle Attack").

Poor weather delayed *Adlertag* ("Eagle Day") until 13 August 1940. On 12 August, the first attempt was made to blind the Dowding system, when aircraft from the specialist fighter-bomber unit *Erprobungsgruppe* 210 attacked four radar stations. Three were briefly taken off the air but were back working within six hours.<sup>[143]</sup> The raids appeared to show that British radars were difficult to knock out. The failure to mount follow-up attacks allowed the RAF to get the stations back on the air, and the *Luftwaffe* neglected strikes on the supporting infrastructure, such as phone lines and power stations, which could have rendered the radars useless, even if the towers themselves (which

were very difficult to destroy) remained intact.<sup>[93]</sup>

*Adlertag* opened with a series of attacks, led again by *Epro* 210,<sup>[143]</sup> on coastal airfields used as forward landing grounds for the RAF fighters, as well as 'satellite airfields'<sup>[144]</sup> (including Manston and Hawkinge).<sup>[143]</sup> As the week drew on, the airfield attacks moved further inland, and repeated raids were made on the radar chain. 15 August was "The Greatest Day" when the *Luftwaffe* mounted the largest number of sorties of the campaign. *Luftflotte* 5 attacked the north of England. Believing Fighter Command strength to be concentrated in the south, raiding forces from Denmark and Norway ran into unexpectedly strong resistance. Inadequately escorted by Bf 110s, bombers were shot down in large numbers. North East England was attacked by 65 Heinkel 111s escorted by 34 Messerschmitt 110s, and RAF Great Driffield was attacked by 50 unescorted Junkers 88s. Out of 115 bombers and 35 fighters sent, 16 bombers and 7 fighters were destroyed.<sup>[145]</sup> As a result of these casualties, *Luftflotte* 5 did not appear in strength again in the campaign.

18 August, which had the greatest number of casualties to both sides, has been dubbed "The Hardest Day". Following the grinding battles of 18 August, exhaustion and the weather reduced operations for most of a week, allowing the *Luftwaffe* to review their performance. "The Hardest Day" had sounded the end for the Ju 87 in the campaign.<sup>[146]</sup> This veteran of *Blitzkrieg* was too vulnerable to fighters to operate over Britain, and to preserve the *Stuka* force, Göring withdrew them from the fighting. This removed the main *Luftwaffe* precision-bombing weapon and shifted the burden of pinpoint attacks on the already-stretched *Erpro* 210. The Bf 110 proved too clumsy for dogfighting with single-engined fighters, and its participation was scaled back. It would only be used when range required it or when sufficient single-engined escort could not be provided for the bombers.

Göring made yet another fateful decision: to order more bomber escorts at the expense of free-hunting sweeps. To achieve this, the weight of the attack now fell on *Luftflotte* 2, and the bulk of the Bf 109s in *Luftflotte* 3 were transferred to Kesselring's command, reinforcing the fighter bases in the Pas-de-Calais. Stripped of its fighters, *Luftflotte* 3 would concentrate on the night bombing campaign. Göring, expressing disappointment with the fighter performance thus far in the campaign, also made sweeping changes in the command structure of the fighter units, replacing many *Geschwaderkommodore* with younger, more aggressive pilots like Adolf Galland and Werner Mölders.<sup>[147]</sup>

Finally, Göring stopped the attacks on the radar chain. These were seen as unsuccessful, and neither the *Reichsmarschall* nor his subordinates realised how vital the Chain Home stations were to the defence. It was known that radar provided some early warning of raids, but the belief among German fighter pilots was that anything bringing up the "Tommies" to fight was to be encouraged.

## **The *Luftwaffe* targets RAF airfields**

### **Battle**



Göring ordered attacks on aircraft factories on 19 August 1940; on 23 August 1940 he ordered that RAF airfields be attacked. That evening an attack was mounted on a tyre factory in Birmingham. Raids on airfields continued through 24 August, and Portsmouth was hit by a major attack. That night, several areas of London were bombed; the East End was set ablaze and bombs landed on central London. Some historians believe that these bombs were dropped accidentally by a group of Heinkel He 111s which had failed to find their target; this account has been contested.<sup>[148]</sup> In retaliation, the RAF bombed Berlin on the night of 25–26 August, and continued bombing raids on Berlin. Göring's pride was hurt, as he had previously claimed the British would never be able to bomb the city. The attacks enraged Hitler, who ordered retaliatory attacks on London.<sup>[149]</sup>



Polish 303 squadron pilots, 1940. Left to right: P/O Ferić, Flt Lt Kent, F/O Grzeszczak, P/O Radomski, P/O Zumbach, P/O Łokuciewski, F/O Henneberg, Sgt. Rogowski, Sgt. Szaposznikow.

From 24 August onwards, the battle was a fight between Kesselring's *Luftflotte 2* and Park's 11 Group. The *Luftwaffe* concentrated all their strength on knocking out Fighter Command and made repeated attacks on the airfields. Of the 33 heavy attacks in the following two weeks, 24 were against airfields. The key sector stations were hit repeatedly: Biggin Hill and Hornchurch four times each; Debden and North Weald twice each. Croydon, Gravesend, Rochford, Hawkinge and Manston were also attacked in strength. Coastal Command's Eastchurch was bombed at least seven times because it was believed to be a Fighter Command aerodrome. At times these raids caused some damage to the sector stations, threatening the integrity of the Dowding system.

To offset some losses, some 58 Fleet Air Arm fighter pilot volunteers were seconded to RAF squadrons, and a similar number of former Fairey Battle pilots were used. Most replacements from Operational Training Units (OTUs) had as little as nine hours flying time and no gunnery or air-to-air combat training. At this point, the multinational nature of Fighter Command came to the fore. Many squadrons and personnel from the air forces of the Dominions were already attached to the RAF, including top level commanders – Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders, Rhodesians and South Africans. In addition, there were other nationalities represented, including Free French, Belgian and a Jewish pilot from the British mandate of Palestine.

They were bolstered by the arrival of fresh Czechoslovak and Polish squadrons. These had been held back by Dowding, who mistakenly thought non-English speaking aircrew would have trouble working within his control system. However, Polish and Czech fliers proved to be especially effective. The pre-war Polish Air Force had lengthy and extensive training, and high standards; with Poland conquered and under brutal German occupation, the pilots of No. 303 (Polish) Squadron, the highest-scoring Allied unit,<sup>[150]</sup> were strongly motivated. Josef František, a Czech regular airman who had flown from the occupation of his own country to join the Polish and then French air forces before arriving in Britain, flew as a guest of 303 Squadron and was ultimately credited with the highest "RAF score" in the Battle of Britain.<sup>[151]</sup>

The RAF had the advantage of fighting over home territory. Pilots who bailed out of their downed aircraft could be back at their airfields within hours. For *Luftwaffe* aircrews, a bailout over England meant capture, while parachuting into the English Channel often meant drowning or death from exposure. Morale began to suffer, and *Kanalkrankheit* ("Channel sickness") – a form of combat fatigue – began to appear among the German pilots. Their replacement problem was even worse than the British.

### Impact of offensive

The effect of the German attacks on airfields is not straightforward. Stephen Bungay's research tells us that Dowding, in a letter to Hugh Trenchard<sup>[152]</sup> accompanying Park's report on the period 8 August – 10 September 1940, states that the *Luftwaffe* "achieved very little" in the last week of August and the first week of September.<sup>[153]</sup> The only Sector Station to be shut down operationally was Biggin Hill, and it was non-operational for just two hours. Dowding admitted 11 Group's efficiency was impaired but, despite serious damage to some airfields, only two out of 13 heavily attacked airfields were down for more than a few hours. The German refocus on London was not critical.<sup>[153]</sup>

Retired air marshal Peter Dye, head of the RAF Museum, discussed the logistics of the battle in 2000<sup>[154]</sup> and 2010,<sup>[155]</sup> dealing specifically with the single-seat fighters. Dye contends that not only was British aircraft production replacing aircraft, but replacement pilots were keeping pace with losses. The number of pilots in RAF Fighter Command increased during July, August and September. The figures indicate the number of pilots available never decreased. From July, 1,200 were available. In 1 August, 1,400 were available. Just over that number were in the field by September. In October the figure was nearly 1,600. By 1 November 1,800 were available. Throughout the battle, the RAF had more fighter pilots available than the *Luftwaffe*.<sup>[154][155]</sup> Although the RAF's reserves of single seat fighters fell during July, the wastage was made up for by an efficient Civilian Repair Organisation (CRO), which by December had repaired and put back into service some 4,955 aircraft,<sup>[156]</sup> and by aircraft held at Air Servicing Unit (ASU) airfields.<sup>[157]</sup>

Richard Overy endorses Dye and Bungay. Overy asserts only one airfield was temporarily put out of action and "only" 103 pilots were lost. British fighter production produced 496 new aircraft in July and 467 in August, and another 467 in September (not counting repaired aircraft), covering the losses of August and September. Overy indicates the number of serviceable and total strength returns reveal an *increase* in fighters from 3 August to 7 September, 1,061 on strength and 708 serviceable to 1,161 on strength and 746 serviceable.<sup>[158]</sup> Moreover, Overy points out that the number of RAF fighter pilots grew by one-third between June and August 1940. Personnel records show a constant supply of around 1,400 pilots in the crucial weeks of the battle. In the second half of September it reached 1,500. The shortfall of pilots was never above 10 percent. The Germans never had more than between 1,100 and 1,200 pilots, a deficiency of up to one-third. "If Fighter Command were 'the few', the German fighter pilots were fewer".<sup>[159]</sup>

American historian James Corum points out that it was unlikely that the *Luftwaffe* was ever able to destroy the RAF. If British losses became severe, the RAF could simply withdraw northward and regroup. It could then deploy when and if the Germans launched an invasion. Corum doubts that the *Luftwaffe* could have defeated the RAF in the limited time available before the weather window closed in October. Corum also argues that the *Sea Lion* would have failed because of the weaknesses of German sea power.<sup>[160]</sup>

Older history books assert this period was the most dangerous of all. In *The Narrow Margin*, published in 1961, historians Derek Wood and Derek Dempster believed that the period from 24 August to 6 September represented a real danger. According to them, from 24 August to 6 September 295 fighters had been totally destroyed and 171 badly damaged, against a total output of 269 new and repaired Spitfires and Hurricanes. They assert that 103 pilots were killed or missing and 128 were wounded, which represented a total wastage of 120 pilots per week out of a fighting strength of just fewer than 1,000. They conclude that during August no more than 260 fighter pilots were turned out by OTUs and casualties in the same month were just over 300. A full squadron establishment was 26 pilots whereas the average in August was 16. In their assessment, the RAF was losing the battle.<sup>[161]</sup>

By this point Hitler was becoming impatient with the *Luftwaffe*. On 14 September, General Hans Jeschonnek, *Luftwaffe* Chief of Staff, persuaded Hitler for a last chance to defeat the RAF and sought permission to launch attacks on civilian residential areas to cause mass panic. Hitler refused the latter, perhaps unaware of just how much damage had already been done to civilian targets, as he wanted to reserve for himself the right to unleash the terror weapon. Political will was to be broken by the collapse of the material infrastructure, the weapons industry, along

with the destruction of stocks of fuel and food. On 16 September, Göring ordered the air fleets to begin the new phase of the battle.<sup>[162]</sup>

### Raids on British cities

Hitler's No. 17 Directive, issued 1 August 1940 on the conduct of war against England specifically prohibited *Luftwaffe* from conducting terror raids on its own initiative, and reserved the right of ordering terror attacks as means of reprisal for the Führer himself:<sup>[163]</sup>

The war against England is to be restricted to destructive attacks against industry and air force targets which have weak defensive forces... The most thorough study of the target concerned, that is vital points of the target, is a pre-requisite for success. It is also stressed that every effort should be made to avoid unnecessary loss of life amongst the civilian population.<sup>[164]</sup>

The *Luftwaffe* offensive against Britain had included numerous raids on major ports since August, but Hitler had issued a directive London was not to be bombed save on his sole instruction.<sup>[165]</sup> However, on the afternoon of 15 August, *Hauptmann* Walter Rubensdörffer leading *Erprobungsgruppe* 210 mistakenly bombed the Croydon airfield (on the outskirts of London) instead of the intended target, RAF Kenley;<sup>[166]</sup> this was followed on the night of 23/24 August<sup>[132]</sup> by the accidental bombing of Harrow, also on the outskirts of London, as well as raids on Aberdeen, Bristol, and South Wales. The focus on attacking airfields had also been accompanied by a sustained bombing campaign which began on 24 August with the largest raid so far, killing 100 in Portsmouth, and that evening the first night raid on London as described above.<sup>[148]</sup> On 25 August 1940, 81 bombers of Bomber Command were sent out to raid industrial and commercial targets in Berlin. Clouds prevented accurate identification and the bombs fell across the city, causing some casualties amongst the civilian population as well as damage to residential areas.<sup>[167]</sup> Continuing RAF raids on Berlin in retaliation led to Hitler withdrawing his directive,<sup>[168]</sup> and on 3 September Göring planned to bomb London daily, with Kesselring's enthusiastic support, having received reports the average strength of RAF squadrons was down to five or seven fighters out of 12 and their airfields in the area were out of action. Hitler issued a directive on 5 September to attack cities including London.<sup>[169][170]</sup> In his speech delivered on 4 September 1940, Hitler threatened to obliterate (*ausradieren*) British cities if British bombing runs against Germany did not stop.

On 7 September, a massive series of raids involving nearly four hundred bombers and more than six hundred fighters targeted docks in the East End of London, day and night. The raids were codenamed Operation Loge. The RAF anticipated attacks on airfields and 11 Group rose to meet them, in greater numbers than the *Luftwaffe* expected. The first official deployment of 12 Group's Big Wing took twenty minutes to gain formation, missing its intended target, but encountering another formation of bombers while still climbing. They returned, apologetic about their limited success, and blamed the delay on being requested too late.<sup>[149][171]</sup> Fighter Command had been at its lowest ebb, short of men and machines, and the break from airfield attacks allowed them to recover. 11 Group had considerable success in breaking up daytime raids. 12 Group repeatedly disobeyed orders and failed to meet requests to protect 11 Group airfields, but their experiments with increasingly large Big Wings had some successes. The *Luftwaffe* began to abandon their morning raids, with attacks on London starting late in the afternoon for 57 consecutive nights of attacks.<sup>[172]</sup>

The most damaging aspect to the *Luftwaffe* of the change in targets (to London) was the increase in range. The Bf 109 escorts had a limited fuel capacity, and by the time they arrived had only 10 minutes of flying time before they had to turn for home. This left many raids undefended by fighter escorts.

On 14 September Hitler chaired a meeting with the OKW staff. Göring was absent in France, as he had decided to direct the decisive part of the battle from there, and left Erhard Milch to deputise for him.<sup>[173]</sup> At the meeting Hitler raised the question, "Should we call it off altogether?". Hitler had accepted that an invasion with massive air cover was no longer possible. Instead he opted to try to crush British morale, while maintaining the threat of invasion. Hitler concluded this might result in "eight million going mad" (referring to the population of London in 1940), which would "cause a catastrophe" for the British. In those circumstances, Hitler said, "even a small invasion might go a long way". At this point Hitler was against cancelling the invasion as "the cancellation would reach the ears of the enemy and strengthen his resolve".<sup>[174][175]</sup>

On 15 September two massive waves of German attacks were decisively repulsed by the RAF, with every aircraft of 11 Group being used on that day. The total casualties on this critical day were 60 German and 26 RAF aircraft shot down. The German defeat caused Hitler to order, two days later, the *postponement* of preparations for the invasion of Britain. Henceforth, in the face of mounting losses in men, aircraft and the lack of adequate replacements, the *Luftwaffe* switched from daylight to nighttime bombing. The air battles on 15 September became known as the Battle of Britain Day.

On 27 September, a Junkers Ju 88 returning from a raid on London was shot down in Kent, resulting in the Battle of Graveney Marsh, the last action between British and foreign military forces on British mainland soil.<sup>[176]</sup>

On 13 October, Hitler again postponed the invasion "until the spring of 1941"; however, the invasion never happened, and October is regarded as the month regular bombing of Britain ended.<sup>[132]</sup> It was not until Hitler's Directive 21 was issued, on 18 December 1940, that the threat of invasion finally dissipated.<sup>[132]</sup>

During the battle, and for the rest of the war, an important factor in keeping public morale high was the continued presence in London of King George VI and his wife Queen Elizabeth. When war broke out in 1939, the King and Queen decided to stay in London and not flee to Canada, as had been suggested.<sup>[177]</sup> George VI and Elizabeth officially stayed in Buckingham Palace throughout the war, although they often spent weekends at Windsor Castle to visit their daughters, Elizabeth (the future queen) and Margaret.<sup>[178]</sup> Buckingham Palace was damaged by bombs which landed in the grounds on 10 September, and on 13 September, more serious damage was caused by two bombs which destroyed the Royal Chapel. The royal couple were in a small sitting room about 80 yards from where the bombs exploded.<sup>[179][180]</sup> On 24 September, in recognition of the bravery of civilians, King George VI inaugurated the award of the George Cross.

## Attrition statistics

Overall, by 2 November, the RAF fielded 1,796 pilots, an increase of over 40% from July 1940's count of 1,259 pilots.<sup>[181]</sup> Based on German sources (from a *Luftwaffe* intelligence officer Otto Bechtle attached to KG 2 in February 1944) translated by the Air Historical Branch, Stephen Bungay asserts German fighter and bomber "strength" declined without recovery, and that from August – December 1940, the German fighter and bomber strength declined by 30 and 25 percent.<sup>[182]</sup> In contrast, Williamson Murray, asserts (using translations by the Air Historical Branch) that 1,380 German bombers were on strength on 29 June 1940,<sup>[183]</sup> 1,420 bombers on 28 September,<sup>[184]</sup> 1,423 level bombers on 2 November<sup>[185]</sup> and 1,393 bombers on 30 November 1940.<sup>[185]</sup> In July – September the number of *Luftwaffe* pilots available fell by 136, but the number of operational pilots had shrunk by



Members of the London Auxiliary Firefighting Service.

171 by September. The training organisation of the *Luftwaffe* was failing to replace losses. German fighter pilots, in contrast to popular perception, were not afforded training or rest rotations unlike their British counterparts.<sup>[186]</sup> The first week of September accounted for 25 per cent of the Fighter Command, and 24 per cent of the *Luftwaffe's* overall losses.<sup>[187]</sup> Between the dates 26 August – 6 September, on only one day (1 September) did the Germans destroy more aircraft than they lost. Losses were 325 German and 248 British.<sup>[188]</sup>

*Luftwaffe* losses for August numbered 774 aircraft to all causes, representing 18.5 per cent of all combat aircraft at the beginning of the month.<sup>[189]</sup> Fighter Command's losses in August were 426 fighters destroyed,<sup>[190]</sup> amounting to 40 per cent of 1,061 fighters available on 3 August.<sup>[191]</sup> In addition, 99 bombers and 27 other types were destroyed between 1 and 29 August.<sup>[192]</sup>

From July to September, the *Luftwaffe's* loss records indicate the loss of 1,636 aircraft, 1,184 to enemy action.<sup>[183]</sup> This represented 47 per cent of the initial strength of single-engined fighters, 66 per cent of twin-engined fighters, and 45 per cent of bombers. This indicates the Germans were running out of aircrews as well as aircraft.<sup>[193]</sup>

Throughout the battle, the Germans greatly underestimated the size of the RAF and the scale of British aircraft production. Across the Channel, the Air Intelligence division of the Air Ministry consistently overestimated the size of the German air enemy and the productive capacity of the German aviation industry. As the battle was fought, both sides exaggerated the losses inflicted on the other by an equally large margin. However, the intelligence picture formed before the battle encouraged the German Air Force to believe that such losses pushed Fighter Command to the very edge of defeat, while the exaggerated picture of German air strength persuaded the RAF that the threat it faced was larger and more dangerous than was the case.<sup>[194]</sup> This led the British to the conclusion that another fortnight of attacks on airfields might force Fighter Command to withdraw their squadrons from the south of England. The German misconception, on the other hand, encouraged first complacency, then strategic misjudgement. The shift of targets from air bases to industry and communications was taken because it was assumed that Fighter Command was virtually eliminated.<sup>[195]</sup>

Between the 24 August and 4 September German serviceability rates, which were acceptable at *Stuka* units, were running at 75% with Bf 109s, 70% with bombers and 65% with Bf 110s, indicating a shortage of spare parts. All units were well below established strength. The attrition was beginning to affect the fighters in particular."<sup>[196]</sup> By 14 September the *Luftwaffe's* Bf 109 *Geschwader* possessed only 67 percent of their operational crews against authorised aircraft. For Bf 110 units it was 46 per cent; and for bombers it was 59 per cent. A week later the figures had dropped to 64 per cent, 52 per cent, and 52 per cent.<sup>[193]</sup> Serviceability rates in Fighter Command's fighter squadrons, between the 24 August and 7 September, were listed as: 64.8% on the 24 August; 64.7% on 31 August and 64.25% on the 7 September 1940.<sup>[191]</sup>

Due to the failure of the *Luftwaffe* to establish air supremacy, a conference assembled on 14 September at Hitler's headquarters. Hitler concluded that air superiority had not yet been established and "promised to review the situation on 17 September for possible landings on 27 September or 8 October. Three days later, when the evidence was clear that the German Air Force had greatly exaggerated the extent of their successes against the RAF, Hitler postponed Sealion indefinitely."<sup>[197]</sup>

## Aftermath

The Battle of Britain marked the first defeat of Hitler's military forces, with air superiority seen as the key to victory.<sup>[198]</sup> Pre-war theories led to exaggerated fears of strategic bombing, and British public opinion was invigorated by having come through the ordeal.<sup>[199]</sup> For the British, Fighter Command had achieved a great victory in successfully carrying out Sir Thomas Inskip's 1937 air policy of preventing the Germans from knocking Britain out of the war. The Fighter Command was so successful that the conclusion to Churchill's famous 'Battle of Britain' speech made in the House of Commons on 18 June, has come to refer solely to them: "...if the British Empire and its Commonwealth lasts for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'"<sup>[200][201]</sup>

The Battle also signalled a significant shift in US opinion. During the battle, many people from the U.S. accepted the view promoted by Joseph Kennedy, the U.S. ambassador in London, and believed that Great Britain could not survive. However, Roosevelt wanted a second opinion, and sent "Wild Bill" Donovan on a brief visit to Britain; he became convinced Britain would survive and should be supported in every possible way.<sup>[202][203]</sup>

Both sides in the battle made exaggerated claims of numbers of enemy aircraft shot down. In general, claims were two to three times the actual numbers, because of the confusion of fighting in dynamic three-dimensional air battles. Postwar analysis of records has shown that between July and September, the RAF claimed 2,698 kills, while the *Luftwaffe* fighters claimed 3,198 RAF aircraft downed. Total losses, and start and end dates for recorded losses, vary for both sides. *Luftwaffe* losses from 10 July to 30 October 1940 total 1,652 aircraft, including 229 twin- and 533 single-engined fighters.<sup>[204]</sup> In the same period, RAF Fighter Command aircraft losses number 1,087, including 53 twin-engined fighters.<sup>[204]</sup> To the RAF figure should be added 376 Bomber Command and 148 Coastal Command aircraft conducting bombing, mining, and reconnaissance operations in defence of the country.<sup>[182]</sup>

The *Luftwaffe* had 1,380 bombers on 29 June 1940. By 2 November 1940 this had increased to 1,423,<sup>[205]</sup> and to 1,511 by 21 June 1941, prior to Operation Barbarossa, but showing a drop of 200 from 1,711 reported on 11 May 1940.<sup>[206][207][208]</sup> 1,107 single- and 357 twin-engined daylight fighters were reported on strength prior to the Battle on 29 June 1940, compared to 1,440 single- and 188 twin-engined fighters, plus 263 night fighters, on 21 June 1941.<sup>[183][206]</sup>

There is a consensus among historians that the *Luftwaffe* simply could not crush the RAF. Stephen Bungay described Dowding and Park's strategy of choosing when to engage the enemy whilst maintaining a coherent force as vindicated. The RAF proved to be a robust and capable organisation which was to use all the modern resources available to it to the maximum advantage.<sup>[209]</sup> Richard Evans wrote:

Irrespective of whether Hitler was really set on this course, he simply lacked the resources to establish the air superiority that was the sine qua non of a successful crossing of the English Channel. A third of the initial strength of the German air force, the *Luftwaffe*, had been lost in the western campaign in the spring. The Germans lacked the trained pilots, the effective fighter planes, and the heavy bombers that would have been needed.<sup>[210][211]</sup>

The Germans launched some spectacular attacks against important British industries, but they could not destroy the British industrial potential, and made little systematic effort to do so. Hindsight does not disguise the fact the threat to Fighter Command was very real, and for the participants it seemed as if there was a narrow margin between victory and defeat. Nevertheless, even if the German attacks on the 11 Group airfields which guarded southeast England and the approaches to London had continued, the RAF could have withdrawn to the Midlands out of German fighter range and continued the battle from there.<sup>[212]</sup> The victory was as much psychological as physical. Writes Alfred Price:

The truth of the matter, borne out by the events of 18 August is more prosaic: neither by attacking the airfields, nor by attacking London, was the *Luftwaffe* likely to destroy Fighter Command. Given the size of the British fighter force and the general high quality of its equipment, training and morale, the *Luftwaffe* could have achieved no more than a Pyrrhic victory. During the action on 18 August it had cost the *Luftwaffe* five trained aircrewmen killed, wounded or taken prisoner, for each British fighter pilot killed or wounded; the ratio was similar on other days in the battle. And this ratio of 5:1 was very close to that between the number of German aircrew involved in the battle and those in Fighter Command. In other words the two sides were suffering almost the same losses in trained aircrew, in proportion to their overall strengths. In the Battle of Britain, for the first time during the Second World War, the German war machine had set itself a major task which it patently failed to achieve, and so demonstrated that it was not invincible. In stiffening the resolve of those determined to resist Hitler the battle was an important turning point in the conflict.<sup>[213]</sup>



The British victory in the Battle of Britain was achieved at a heavy cost. Total British civilian losses from July to December 1940 were 23,002 dead and 32,138 wounded, with one of the largest single raids on 19 December 1940, in which almost 3,000 civilians died.

The brilliant leadership of Dowding and Keith Park in successfully proving their theories of air defence, however, had created enmity among RAF senior commanders and both were sacked from their posts in the immediate aftermath of the battle.<sup>[214]</sup>

The end of the battle allowed Britain to rebuild its military forces and establish itself as an Allied stronghold. Britain later served as a base from which the Liberation of Western Europe was launched.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Battle of Britain Day

Winston Churchill summed up the effect of the battle and the contribution of Fighter Command with the words, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few".<sup>[140][215]</sup> Pilots who fought in the Battle have been known as *The Few* ever since. Battle of Britain Day is commemorated in the United Kingdom on 15 September. Within the Commonwealth, Battle of Britain Day is usually observed on the third Sunday in September. In some areas in the British Channel Islands, it is celebrated on the second Thursday in September.

## Film

The story of the battle was documented in, amongst many others, the 1969 film *Battle of Britain*, which drew many respected British actors to act key figures of the battle, including Sir Laurence Olivier as Hugh Dowding and Trevor Howard as Keith Park.<sup>[216]</sup> It also starred Michael Caine, Christopher Plummer and Robert Shaw as Squadron Leaders.<sup>[216]</sup> Former participants of the battle served as technical advisors including Douglas Bader, James Lacey, Robert Stanford Tuck, Adolf Galland and Dowding himself. An Italian film around the same time titled *Eagles Over London* (1969) also featured the Battle of Britain.

It was also the subject of the 1941 Allied propaganda film *Churchill's Island*, winner of the first-ever Academy Award for Documentary Short Subject.<sup>[217]</sup>

In 2010, actor Julian Glover played a 101-year-old Polish veteran RAF pilot in the short film, *Battle for Britain*.<sup>[218]</sup>

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- [37] Feist 1993, p. 29.
- [38] Green 1980, p. 73.
- [39] Weal 1999, pp. 47–48.
- [40] Weal 1999, p. 49.
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- [44] Bungay 2000, pp. 84, 178, 269–273.
- [45] Ansell 2005, pp. 712–714.
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- [50] Holmes 2007, p. 61.
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### General

- Day by Day blog charting the progress of the Battle by ex RAF veteran (<http://battleofbritainblog.com>)
- Battle Of Britain Historical Society (<http://battleofbritain1940.net/bobhsoc/index.html>)
- video: *Battle of Britain* (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSZnFo7JORo>), (52 min.) complete film documentary by Frank Capra made for U.S. Army
- The Battle of Britain "In Photos" (<http://www.life.com/image/first/in-gallery/24892/wwii-the-battle-of-britain>)
- Royal Air Force history (<http://www.raf.mod.uk/bob1940/bobhome.html>)
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- Historical recording BBC: Churchill's "This Was Their Finest Hour" speech (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/churchill-this-was-their-finest-hour-audio/6981.html>)
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- Royal Engineers Museum: Royal Engineers during the Second World War (airfield repair) ([http://www.remuseum.org.uk/corpshistory/rem\\_corps\\_part16.htm](http://www.remuseum.org.uk/corpshistory/rem_corps_part16.htm))
- Shoreham Aircraft Museum (<http://www.shoreham-aircraft-museum.co.uk>)
- Tangmere Military Aviation Museum (<http://www.tangmere-museum.org.uk/>)
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- British Invasion Defences (<http://www.pillboxesuk.co.uk>)
- The Falco and Regia Aeronautica in the Battle of Britain ([http://surfcity.kund.dalnet.se/falco\\_bob.htm](http://surfcity.kund.dalnet.se/falco_bob.htm))
- History of North Weald Airfield (<http://www.northwealdairfieldhistory.org/content/battle-britain>)
- The Royal Mint Memorial website (<http://www.celebratebritain.com/>)
- New Zealanders in the Battle of Britain (NZHistory.net.nz) (<http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/battle-of-britain>)
- Battle for Britain, short film starring Julian Glover (<http://www.battleforbritain.net>)
- Interactive map showing Battle of Britain airfields and squadrons by date (<http://members.multimania.co.uk/hampshire7/ukairfields.html>)

## Guadalcanal Campaign

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The **Guadalcanal Campaign**, also known as the **Battle of Guadalcanal** and codenamed **Operation Watchtower** by Allied forces, was a military campaign fought between August 7, 1942 and February 9, 1943 on and around the island of Guadalcanal in the Pacific theatre of World War II. It was the first major offensive by Allied forces against the Empire of Japan.

On August 7, 1942, Allied forces, predominantly American, landed on the islands of Guadalcanal, Tulagi, and Florida in the southern Solomon Islands with the objective of denying their use by the Japanese to threaten the supply and communication routes between the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand. The Allies also intended to use Guadalcanal and Tulagi as bases to support a campaign to eventually capture or neutralize the major Japanese base at Rabaul on New Britain. The Allies overwhelmed the outnumbered Japanese defenders, who had occupied the islands since May 1942, and captured Tulagi and Florida, as well as an airfield (later named Henderson Field) that was under construction on Guadalcanal. Powerful U.S. naval forces supported the landings.

Surprised by the Allied offensive, the Japanese made several attempts between August and November 1942 to retake Henderson Field. Three major land battles, seven large naval battles (five nighttime surface actions and two carrier battles), and continual, almost daily aerial battles culminated in the decisive Naval Battle of Guadalcanal in early November 1942, in which the last Japanese attempt to bombard Henderson Field from the sea and land with enough troops to retake it was defeated. In December 1942, the Japanese abandoned further efforts to retake Guadalcanal and evacuated their remaining forces by February 7, 1943 in the face of an offensive by the U.S. Army's XIV Corps, conceding the island to the Allies.

The Guadalcanal campaign was a significant strategic combined arms victory by Allied forces over the Japanese in the Pacific theatre. The Japanese had reached the high-water mark of their conquests in the Pacific, and Guadalcanal marked the transition by the Allies from defensive operations to the strategic offensive in that theatre and the beginning of offensive operations, including the Solomon Islands, New Guinea, and Central Pacific campaigns, that resulted in Japan's eventual surrender and the end of World War II.

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## Background

### Strategic considerations

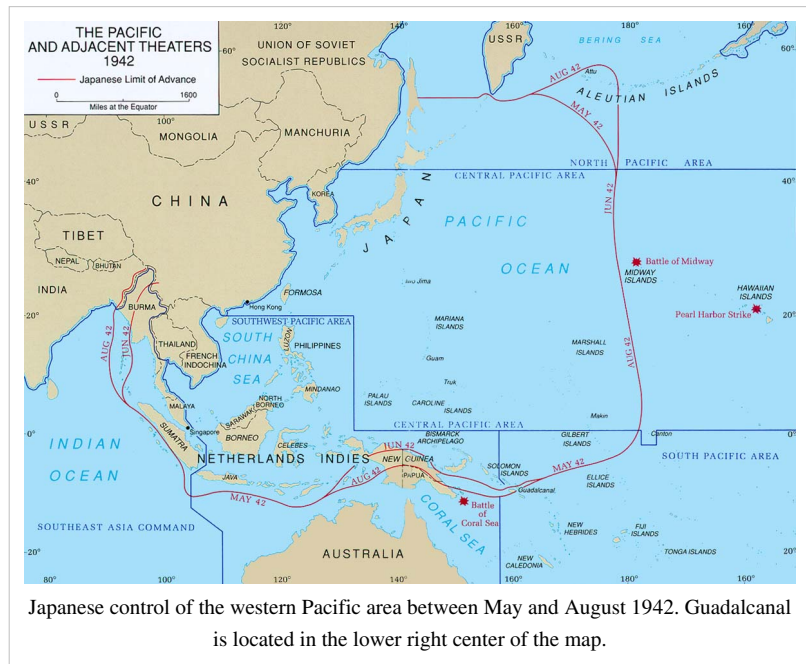
On December 7, 1941, Japanese forces attacked the United States Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The attack crippled much of the U.S. battleship fleet and precipitated an open and formal state of war between the two nations. The initial goals of Japanese leaders were to neutralize the U.S. Navy, seize possessions rich in natural resources, and establish strategic military bases to defend Japan's empire in the Pacific Ocean and Asia. To further those goals, Japanese forces captured the Philippines, Thailand, Malaya, Singapore, Burma, the Dutch East Indies, Wake Island, Gilbert Islands, New Britain and Guam. Joining the U.S. in the war against

Japan were the rest of the Allied powers, several of whom, including Great Britain, Australia and the Netherlands had also been attacked by Japan.<sup>[1]</sup>

Two attempts by the Japanese to continue their strategic initiative and offensively extend their outer defensive perimeter in the south and central Pacific to where they could threaten Australia and Hawaii or the U.S. West Coast were thwarted at the naval battles of Coral Sea and Midway respectively. Coral Sea was a tactical stalemate, but a strategic Allied victory which became clear only much later. Midway was not only the Allies' first clear major victory against the Japanese, it significantly reduced the offensive capability of Japan's carrier forces, but did not change their offensive mindset for several crucial months in which they compounded mistakes by moving ahead with brash, even brazen decisions, such as the attempt to assault Port Moresby over the Kokoda Trail. Up to this point, the Allies had been on the defensive in the Pacific but these strategic victories provided them an opportunity to seize the initiative from Japan.<sup>[2]</sup>

The Allies chose the Solomon Islands (a protectorate of Great Britain), specifically the southern Solomon Islands of Guadalcanal, Tulagi and Florida Island, as the first target.<sup>[3]</sup> The Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) had occupied Tulagi in May 1942 and had constructed a seaplane base nearby. Allied concern grew large when, in early July 1942, the IJN began constructing a large airfield at Lunga Point on nearby Guadalcanal—from such a base Japanese long range bombers would threaten the sea lines of communication from the West Coast of the Americas to the populous East Coast of Australia. By August 1942, the Japanese had about 900 naval troops on Tulagi and nearby islands and 2,800 personnel (2,200 being Korean forced laborers & trustees as well as Japanese construction specialists) on Guadalcanal. These bases would protect Japan's major base at Rabaul, threaten Allied supply and communication lines and establish a staging area for a planned offensive against Fiji, New Caledonia and Samoa (*Operation FS*). The Japanese planned to deploy 45 fighters and 60 bombers to Guadalcanal. In the overall strategy for 1942 these aircraft could provide air cover for Japanese naval forces advancing farther into the South Pacific.<sup>[4]</sup>

The Allied plan to invade the southern Solomons was conceived by U.S. Admiral Ernest King, Commander in Chief, United States Fleet. He proposed the offensive to deny the use of the islands by the Japanese as bases to threaten the



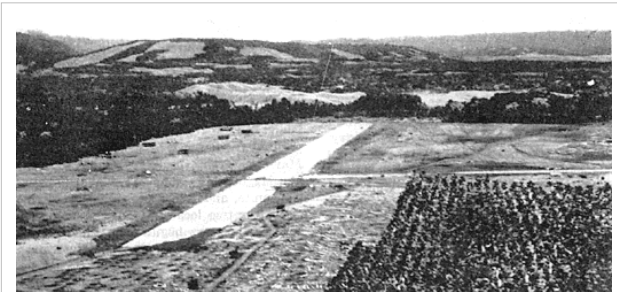


supply routes between the United States and Australia and to use them as starting points. With Roosevelt's tacit consent, King also advocated the invasion of Guadalcanal. Because the United States supported Great Britain's proposal that priority be given to defeating Germany before Japan, the Pacific theater had to compete for personnel and resources with the European theater. Therefore U.S. Army General George C. Marshall opposed King's proposed campaign and asked who would command the operation. King replied that the Navy and Marines would carry out the operation by themselves and instructed Admiral Chester Nimitz to proceed with the preliminary planning. King eventually won the argument with Marshall and the invasion went ahead with the backing of the Combined Joint Chiefs (CJCS).<sup>[5]</sup>

The CJCS ordered for 1942-43 Pacific objectives: that Guadalcanal would be carried out in conjunction with an Allied offensive in New Guinea under Douglas MacArthur, to capture the Admiralty Islands and the Bismarck Archipelago, including the major Japanese base at Rabaul. The directive held that the eventual goal was the American reconquest of the Philippines.<sup>[6]</sup> The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff created the South Pacific theater, with Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley taking command on June 19, 1942, to direct the offensive in the Solomons. Admiral Chester Nimitz, based at Pearl Harbor, was designated as overall Allied commander in chief for Pacific forces.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Task Force

In preparation for the offensive in the Pacific in May 1942, U.S. Marine Major General Alexander Vandegrift was ordered to move his 1st Marine Division from the United States to New Zealand. Other Allied land, naval and air force units were sent to establish or reinforce bases in Fiji, Samoa, New Hebrides and New Caledonia.<sup>[8]</sup> Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides, was selected as the headquarters and main base for the offensive, codenamed *Operation Watchtower*, with the commencement date set for August 7, 1942.



The airfield at Lunga Point on Guadalcanal under construction by Japanese and conscripted Korean laborers in July 1942.

At first, the Allied offensive was planned just for Tulagi and the Santa Cruz Islands, omitting Guadalcanal. After Allied reconnaissance discovered the Japanese airfield construction efforts on Guadalcanal, its capture was added to the plan and the Santa Cruz operation was (eventually) dropped.<sup>[9]</sup> The Japanese were aware, via signals intelligence, of the large-scale movement of Allied forces in the South Pacific area but concluded that the Allies were reinforcing Australia and perhaps Port Moresby in New Guinea.<sup>[10]</sup>

The *Watchtower* force, numbering 75 warships and transports (of vessels from the U.S. and Australia), assembled near Fiji on July 26, 1942 and engaged in one rehearsal landing prior to leaving for Guadalcanal on July 31.<sup>[11]</sup> The commander of the Allied expeditionary force was U.S. Vice Admiral Frank Fletcher (flag in aircraft carrier USS *Saratoga*). Commanding the amphibious forces was U.S. Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner. Vandegrift led the 16,000 Allied (primarily U.S. Marine) infantry earmarked for the landings.<sup>[12]</sup>

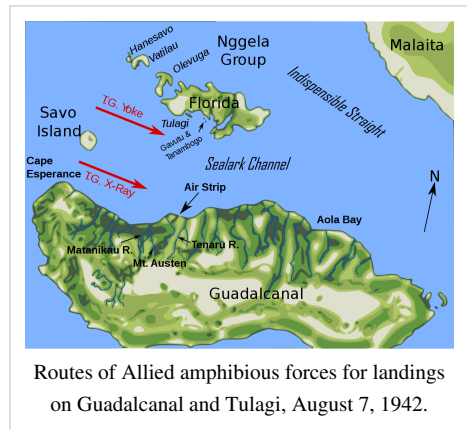
The troops sent to Guadalcanal were fresh from military training and armed with old bolt action rifles and a meager 10 day supply of ammunition. Due to the necessity of getting them into battle quickly, the operation planners had reduced their supplies from a 90 day supply to only 60 days. The troops of the 1st Marine Division began referring to the coming battle as "Operation Shoestring".<sup>[13]</sup>

## Landings

Further information: Battle of Tulagi and Gavutu–Tanambogo

Bad weather allowed the Allied expeditionary force to arrive in the vicinity of Guadalcanal unseen by the Japanese on the morning of August 7 and take the defenders by surprise.<sup>[14]</sup> The landing force split into two groups, with one group assaulting Guadalcanal, and the other Tulagi, Florida, and nearby islands.<sup>[15]</sup> Allied warships bombarded the invasion beaches while U.S. carrier aircraft bombed Japanese positions on the target islands and destroyed 15 Japanese seaplanes at their base near Tulagi.<sup>[16]</sup>

Tulagi and two nearby small islands, Gavutu and Tanambogo, were assaulted by 3,000 U.S. Marines.<sup>[17]</sup> The 886 IJN personnel manning the naval and seaplane bases on the three islands fiercely resisted the Marine attacks.<sup>[18]</sup> With some difficulty, the Marines secured all three islands; Tulagi on August 8, and Gavutu and Tanambogo by August 9.<sup>[19]</sup> The Japanese defenders were killed almost to the last man, while the Marines suffered 122 killed.<sup>[20]</sup>



In contrast to Tulagi, Gavutu, and Tanambogo, the landings on Guadalcanal encountered much less resistance. At 09:10 on August 7, Vandegrift and 11,000 U.S. Marines came ashore on Guadalcanal between Koli Point and Lunga Point. Advancing towards Lunga Point, they encountered no resistance except for "tangled" rain forest, and they halted for the night about 1000 yards (**unknown operator: u'strong'** m) from the Lunga Point airfield. The next day, again against little resistance, the Marines advanced all the way to the Lunga River and secured the airfield by 16:00 on August 8. The Japanese naval construction units and combat troops, under the command of Captain Kanae Monzen, panicked by the warship bombardment and aerial bombing, had abandoned the airfield area and fled about 3 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) west to the Matanikau River and Point Cruz area, leaving behind food, supplies, intact construction equipment and vehicles, and 13 dead.<sup>[21]</sup>



U.S. Marines debark from LCP(L)s onto Guadalcanal on August 7, 1942.

During the landing operations on August 7 and August 8, Japanese naval aircraft based at Rabaul, under the command of Sadayoshi Yamada, attacked the Allied amphibious forces several times, setting afire the transport USS *George F. Elliot* (which sank two days later) and heavily damaging the destroyer USS *Jarvis*.<sup>[22]</sup> In the air attacks over the two days, the Japanese lost 36 aircraft, while the U.S. lost 19, both in combat and to accident, including 14 carrier fighters.<sup>[23]</sup>

After these clashes, Fletcher was concerned about the losses to his carrier fighter aircraft strength, anxious about the threat to his carriers from further Japanese air attacks, and worried about his ship's fuel levels. Fletcher withdrew from the Solomon Islands area with his carrier task forces the evening of August 8.<sup>[24]</sup> As a result of the loss of carrier-based air cover, Turner decided to withdraw his ships from Guadalcanal, even though less than half of the supplies and heavy equipment needed by the troops ashore had been unloaded.<sup>[25]</sup> Turner planned, however, to unload as many supplies as possible on Guadalcanal and Tulagi throughout the night of August 8 and then depart with his ships early on August 9.<sup>[26]</sup>

## Battle of Savo Island

That night, as the transports unloaded, two groups of screening Allied cruisers and destroyers, under the command of British Rear Admiral Victor Crutchley, were surprised and defeated by a Japanese force of seven cruisers and one destroyer from the 8th Fleet, based at Rabaul and Kavieng and commanded by Japanese Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa. In the Battle of Savo Island, one Australian and three American cruisers were sunk and one American cruiser and two destroyers were damaged. The Japanese suffered moderate damage to one cruiser.<sup>[27]</sup> Mikawa, who was unaware Fletcher was preparing to withdraw with the U.S. carriers, immediately retired to Rabaul without attempting to attack the transports. Mikawa was concerned about daylight U.S. carrier air attacks if he remained in the area. Bereft of his carrier air cover Turner decided to withdraw his remaining naval forces by the evening of August 9, leaving the Marines ashore without much of the heavy equipment, provisions and troops still aboard the transports. Mikawa's decision not to attempt to destroy the Allied transport ships when he had the opportunity proved to be a crucial strategic mistake.<sup>[28]</sup>

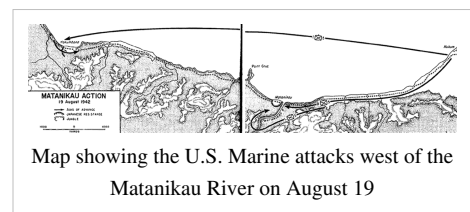
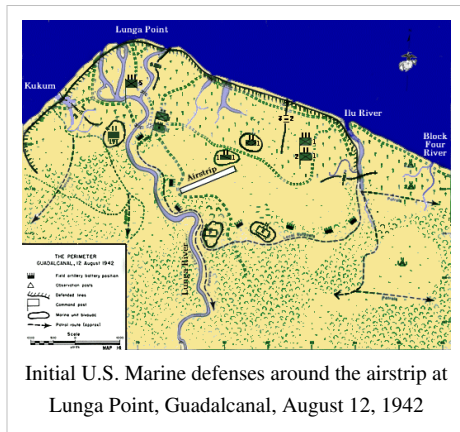
## Initial operations

The 11,000 Marines on Guadalcanal initially concentrated on forming a loose defensive perimeter around Lunga Point and the airfield, moving the landed supplies within the perimeter, and finishing the airfield. In four days of intense effort, the supplies were moved from the landing beach into dispersed dumps within the perimeter. Work began on the airfield immediately, mainly using captured Japanese equipment. On August 12, the airfield was named Henderson Field after Lofton R. Henderson, a Marine aviator who was killed during the Battle of Midway. By August 18, the airfield was ready for operation.<sup>[29]</sup> Five days worth of food had been landed from the transports, which, along with captured Japanese provisions, gave the Marines a total of 14 days worth of food.<sup>[30]</sup> To conserve supplies, the troops were limited to two meals per day.<sup>[31]</sup>

Allied troops encountered a severe strain of dysentery soon after the landings, with one in five Marines afflicted by mid-August. Tropical diseases would affect the fighting strengths of both sides throughout the campaign. Although some of the Korean construction workers surrendered to the Marines, most of the remaining Japanese and Korean personnel gathered just west of the Lunga perimeter on the west bank of the Matanikau River and subsisted mainly on coconuts. A Japanese naval outpost was also located at Taivu Point, about 35 kilometres (22 mi) east of the Lunga perimeter. On August 8, a Japanese destroyer from Rabaul delivered 113 naval reinforcement troops to the Matanikau position.<sup>[32]</sup>

On the evening of August 12, a 25-man U.S. Marine patrol, led by Lieutenant Colonel Frank Goettge and primarily consisting of intelligence personnel, landed by boat west of the Lunga perimeter, between Point Cruz and the Matanikau River, on a reconnaissance mission with a secondary objective of contacting a group of Japanese troops that U.S. forces believed might be willing to surrender. Soon after the patrol landed, a nearby platoon of Japanese naval troops attacked and almost completely wiped out the Marine patrol.<sup>[33]</sup>

In response, on August 19, Vandegrift sent three companies of the U.S. 5th Marine Regiment to attack the Japanese troop concentration west of the Matanikau. One company attacked across the sandbar at the mouth of the Matanikau river while another crossed the river 1000 metres (**unknown operator: u'strong'** yd) inland and attacked the Japanese forces located in Matanikau village. The third landed by boat further west and attacked Kokumbuna



village. After briefly occupying the two villages, the three Marine companies returned to the Lunga perimeter, having killed about 65 Japanese soldiers while losing four. This action, sometimes referred to as the "First Battle of the Matanikau", was the first of several major actions around the Matanikau River during the campaign.<sup>[34]</sup>

On August 20, the escort carrier USS *Long Island* delivered two squadrons of Marine aircraft to Henderson Field, one a squadron of 19 F4F Wildcats, and the other a squadron of 12 SBD Dauntlesses. The aircraft at Henderson became known as the "Cactus Air Force" (CAF) after the Allied codename for Guadalcanal. The Marine fighters went into action the next day, on the first of the almost-daily Japanese bomber air raids. On August 22, five U.S. Army P-400 Airacobras and their pilots arrived at Henderson Field.<sup>[35]</sup>

## Battle of the Tenaru

In response to the Allied landings on Guadalcanal, the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters assigned the Imperial Japanese Army's (IJA) 17th Army, a corps-sized command based at Rabaul and under the command of Lieutenant General Harukichi Hyakutake, the task of retaking Guadalcanal. The army was to be supported by Japanese naval units, including the Combined Fleet under the command of Isoroku Yamamoto, which was headquartered at Truk. The 17th Army, at that time heavily involved in the Japanese campaign in New Guinea, had only a few units available. Of these, the 35th Infantry Brigade under Major General Kiyotake Kawaguchi was at Palau, the 4th (Aoba) Infantry Regiment was in the Philippines and the 28th (Ichiki) Infantry Regiment, under the command of Colonel Kiyonao Ichiki, was on board transport ships near Guam. The different units began to move towards Guadalcanal via Truk and Rabaul immediately, but Ichiki's regiment, being the closest, arrived in the area first. A "First Element" of Ichiki's unit, consisting of about 917 soldiers, landed from destroyers at Taivu Point, east of the Lunga perimeter, after midnight on August 19, then made a 9-mile (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) night march west toward the Marine perimeter.<sup>[36][37]</sup>

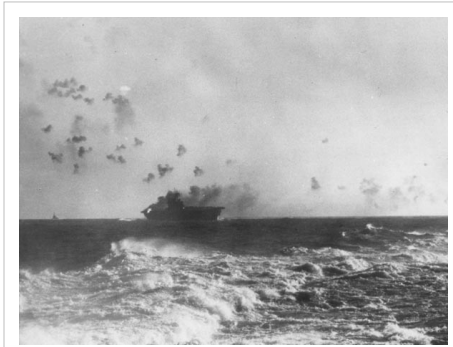


Dead Japanese soldiers on the sandbar at the mouth of Alligator Creek, Guadalcanal after the Battle of the Tenaru.

Underestimating the strength of Allied forces on Guadalcanal, Ichiki's unit conducted a nighttime frontal assault on Marine positions at Alligator Creek (often called the "Ilu River" on U.S. Marine maps) on the east side of the Lunga perimeter in the early morning hours of August 21. Ichiki's assault was defeated with heavy Japanese losses in what became known as the Battle of the Tenaru. After daybreak, the Marine units counterattacked Ichiki's surviving troops, killing many more of them. The dead included Ichiki, though it has been claimed that he committed seppuku after realizing the magnitude of his defeat, rather than dying in combat.<sup>[38]</sup> In total, all but 128 of the original 917 members of the Ichiki Regiment's First Element were killed in the battle. The survivors returned to Taivu Point, notified 17th Army headquarters of their defeat and awaited further reinforcements and orders from Rabaul.<sup>[39]</sup>

## Battle of the Eastern Solomons

As the Tenaru battle was ending, more Japanese reinforcements were already on their way. Three slow transports departed from Truk on August 16 carrying the remaining 1,400 soldiers from Ichiki's (28th) Infantry Regiment plus 500 naval marines from the 5th Yokosuka Special Naval Landing Force.<sup>[40]</sup> The transports were guarded by 13 warships commanded by Japanese Rear Admiral Raizo Tanaka, who planned to land the troops on Guadalcanal on August 24.<sup>[41]</sup> To cover the landings of these troops and provide support for the operation to retake Henderson Field from Allied forces, Yamamoto directed Chuichi Nagumo to sortie with a carrier force from Truk on August 21 and head towards the southern Solomon Islands. Nagumo's force included three carriers and 30 other warships.<sup>[42]</sup>



The carrier USS *Enterprise* (CV-6) under aerial attack during the Battle of the Eastern Solomons.

Simultaneously, three U.S. carrier task forces under Fletcher approached Guadalcanal to counter the Japanese offensive efforts. On August 24 and 25, the two carrier forces fought the Battle of the Eastern Solomons, which resulted in both fleets retreating from the area after taking some damage, with the Japanese losing one light aircraft carrier. Tanaka's convoy, after suffering heavy damage during the battle from an air attack by CAF aircraft from Henderson Field, including the sinking of one of the transports, was forced to divert to the Shortland Islands in the northern Solomons in order to transfer the surviving troops to destroyers for later delivery to Guadalcanal.<sup>[43]</sup>

## Air battles over Henderson Field and strengthening of the Lunga defenses

Further information: Cactus Air Force

Throughout August, small numbers of U.S. aircraft and their crews continued to arrive at Guadalcanal. By the end of August, 64 aircraft of various types were stationed at Henderson Field.<sup>[44]</sup> On September 3, the commander of 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, U.S. Marine Brigadier General Roy S. Geiger, arrived with his staff and took command of all air operations at Henderson Field.<sup>[45]</sup> Air battles between the Allied aircraft at Henderson and Japanese bombers and fighters from Rabaul continued almost daily. Between August 26 and September 5, the U.S. lost about 15 aircraft while the Japanese lost approximately 19 aircraft. More than half of the downed U.S. aircrews were rescued while most of the Japanese aircrews were never recovered. The eight-hour round trip flight from Rabaul to Guadalcanal, about 1120 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) total, seriously hampered Japanese efforts to establish air superiority over Henderson Field. Australian coastwatchers on Bougainville and New Georgia islands were often able to provide Allied forces on Guadalcanal with advance notice of inbound Japanese air strikes, allowing the U.S. fighters time to take off and position themselves to attack the Japanese bombers and fighters as they approached the island. Thus, the Japanese air forces were slowly losing a war of attrition in the skies above Guadalcanal.<sup>[46]</sup>



U.S. Marine F4F Wildcat fighters ascend from Henderson Field to attack incoming Japanese aircraft in late August or early September 1942.

During this time, Vandegrift continued to direct efforts to strengthen and improve the defenses of the Lunga perimeter. Between August 21 and September 3, he relocated three Marine battalions, including the 1st Raider Battalion, under Merritt A. Edson (Edson's Raiders), and the 1st Parachute Battalion from Tulagi and Gavutu to

Guadalcanal. These units added about 1,500 troops to Vandegrift's original 11,000 men defending Henderson Field.<sup>[47]</sup> The 1st Parachute Battalion, which had suffered heavy casualties in the Battle of Tulagi and Gavutu-Tanambogo in August, was placed under Edson's command.<sup>[48]</sup>

The other relocated battalion, the 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment (1/5), was landed by boat west of the Matanikau near Kokumbuna village on August 27 with the mission of attacking Japanese units in the area, much as in the first Matanikau action of August 19. In this case, however, the Marines were impeded by difficult terrain, hot sun, and well-emplaced Japanese defenses. The next morning, the Marines found that the Japanese defenders had departed during the night, so the Marines returned to the Lunga perimeter by boat.<sup>[49]</sup> Losses in this action were 20 Japanese and 3 Marines killed.<sup>[50]</sup>

Small Allied naval convoys arrived at Guadalcanal on August 23, August 29, September 1, and September 8 to provide the Marines at Lunga with more food, ammunition, aircraft fuel, and aircraft technicians. The September 1 convoy also brought 392 construction engineers to maintain and improve Henderson Field.<sup>[51]</sup>

## Tokyo Express

By August 23, Kawaguchi's 35th Infantry Brigade reached Truk and was loaded onto slow transport ships for the rest of the trip to Guadalcanal. The damage done to Tanaka's convoy during the Battle of the Eastern Solomons caused the Japanese to reconsider trying to deliver more troops to Guadalcanal by slow transport. Instead, the ships carrying Kawaguchi's soldiers were sent to Rabaul. From there, the Japanese planned to deliver Kawaguchi's men to Guadalcanal by destroyers staging through a Japanese naval base in the Shortland Islands. The Japanese destroyers were usually able to make round trips down "The Slot" (New Georgia Sound) to Guadalcanal and back in a single night throughout the campaign, minimizing their exposure to Allied air attack; they became known as the "Tokyo Express" to Allied forces and were labeled "Rat Transportation" by the Japanese.<sup>[52]</sup> Delivering the troops in this manner, however, prevented most of the heavy equipment and supplies, such as heavy artillery, vehicles, and much food and ammunition, from being transported to Guadalcanal with them. In addition, this activity tied up destroyers the IJN desperately needed for commerce defense. Either inability or unwillingness prevented Allied naval commanders from challenging Japanese naval forces at night, so the Japanese controlled the seas around the Solomon Islands during nighttime. However, any Japanese ship remaining within range of the aircraft at Henderson Field during the daylight hours, about 200 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km), was in great danger from air attack. This tactical situation existed for the next several months of the campaign.<sup>[53]</sup>



Japanese troops load onto a destroyer for a "Tokyo Express" run to Guadalcanal

Between August 29 and September 4, various Japanese light cruisers, destroyers, and patrol boats were able to land almost 5,000 troops at Taivu Point, including most of the 35th Infantry Brigade, much of the Aoba (4th) Regiment, and the rest of Ichiki's regiment. General Kawaguchi, who landed at Taivu Point on the August 31 Express run, was placed in command of all Japanese forces on Guadalcanal.<sup>[54]</sup> A barge convoy took another 1,000 soldiers of Kawaguchi's brigade, under the command of Colonel Akinosuke Oka, to Kamimbo, west of the Lunga perimeter.<sup>[55]</sup>



## Battle of Edson's Ridge

On September 7, Kawaguchi issued his attack plan to "rout and annihilate the enemy in the vicinity of the Guadalcanal Island airfield." Kawaguchi's attack plan called for his forces, split into three divisions, to approach the Lunga perimeter inland, culminating with a surprise night attack. Oka's forces would attack the perimeter from the west while Ichiki's Second Echelon, now renamed the Kuma Battalion, would attack from the east. The main attack would be by Kawaguchi's "Center Body", numbering 3,000 men in three battalions, from the jungle south of the Lunga perimeter.<sup>[56]</sup> By September 7, most of Kawaguchi's troops had departed Taivu to begin marching towards Lunga Point along the coastline. About 250 Japanese troops remained behind to guard the brigade's supply base at Taivu.<sup>[57]</sup>

Meanwhile, native scouts under the direction of Martin Clemens, a coastwatcher, officer in the Solomon Islands Protectorate Defense Force, and the British district officer for Guadalcanal, brought reports to the U.S. Marines of Japanese troops at Taivu, near the village of Tasimboko. Edson planned a raid on the Japanese troop concentration at Taivu.<sup>[58]</sup> On September 8, after being dropped-off near Taivu by boat, Edson's men captured Tasimboko as the Japanese defenders retreated into the jungle.<sup>[59]</sup> In Tasimboko, Edson's troops discovered Kawaguchi's main supply depot, including large stockpiles of food, ammunition, medical supplies, and a powerful shortwave radio. After destroying everything in sight, except for some documents and equipment carried back with them, the Marines returned to the Lunga perimeter. The mounds of supplies, along with intelligence gathered from the captured documents, informed the Marines that at least 3,000 Japanese troops were on the island and apparently planning an attack.<sup>[60]</sup>

Edson, along with Colonel Gerald C. Thomas, Vandegrift's operations officer, correctly believed that the Japanese attack would come at a narrow, grassy, 1000 yards (**unknown operator: u'strong'** m)-long, coral ridge that ran parallel to the Lunga River and was located just south of Henderson Field. The ridge, called Lunga Ridge, offered a natural avenue of approach to the airfield, commanded the surrounding area and, at that time, was almost undefended. On September 11, the 840 men of Edson's battalion were deployed onto and around the ridge.<sup>[61]</sup>



Map of the Lunga perimeter on Guadalcanal showing the approach routes of the Japanese forces and the locations of the Japanese attacks during the battle. Oka's attacks were in the west (left), the Kuma Battalion attacked from the east (right) and the Center Body attacked "Edson's Ridge" (Lunga Ridge) in the lower center of the map.



U.S. Marine Lieutenant Colonel Merritt A. Edson (here photographed as a major general) who led Marine forces in the Battle of Edson's Ridge

On the night of September 12, Kawaguchi's 1st Battalion attacked the Raiders between the Lunga River and ridge, forcing one Marine company to fall back to the ridge before the Japanese halted their attack for the night. The next night, Kawaguchi faced Edson's 830 Raiders with 3,000 troops of his brigade, plus an assortment of light artillery. The Japanese attack began just after nightfall, with Kawaguchi's 1st battalion assaulting Edson's right flank, just to the west of the ridge. After breaking through the Marine lines, the battalion's assault was eventually stopped by Marine units guarding the northern part of the ridge.<sup>[62]</sup>

Two companies from Kawaguchi's 2nd Battalion charged up the southern edge of the ridge and pushed Edson's troops back to Hill 123 on the center part of the ridge. Throughout the night, Marines at this position, supported by artillery, defeated wave after wave of frontal Japanese attacks, some of which resulted in hand-to-hand fighting.

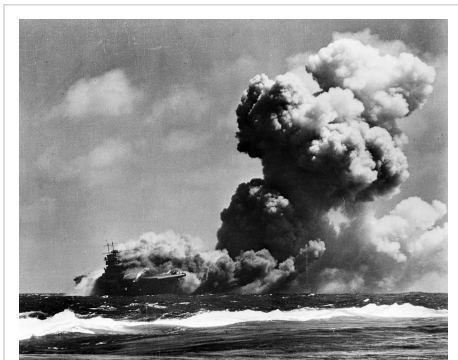
Japanese units that infiltrated past the ridge to the edge of the airfield were also repulsed. Attacks by the Kuma battalion and Oka's unit at other locations on the Lunga perimeter were also defeated. On September 14, Kawaguchi

led the survivors of his shattered brigade on a five day march west to the Matanikau Valley to join with Oka's unit.<sup>[63]</sup> In total, Kawaguchi's forces lost about 850 killed and the Marines 104.<sup>[64]</sup>

On September 15, Hyakutake at Rabaul learned of Kawaguchi's defeat and forwarded the news to Imperial General Headquarters in Japan. In an emergency session, the top Japanese IJA and IJN command staffs concluded that, "Guadalcanal might develop into the decisive battle of the war." The results of the battle now began to have a telling strategic impact on Japanese operations in other areas of the Pacific. Hyakutake realized that in order to send sufficient troops and materiel to defeat the Allied forces on Guadalcanal, he could not at the same time support the major ongoing Japanese offensive on the Kokoda Track in New Guinea. Hyakutake, with the concurrence of General Headquarters, ordered his troops on New Guinea, who were within 30 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) of their objective of Port Moresby, to withdraw until the "Guadalcanal matter" was resolved. Hyakutake prepared to send more troops to Guadalcanal for another attempt to recapture Henderson Field.<sup>[65]</sup>

## Reinforcement

As the Japanese regrouped west of the Matanikau, the U.S. forces concentrated on shoring up and strengthening their Lunga defenses. On September 14, Vandegrift moved another battalion, the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment (3/2), from Tulagi to Guadalcanal. On September 18, an Allied naval convoy delivered 4,157 men from the 3rd Provisional Marine Brigade (the 7th Marine Regiment plus a battalion from the 11th Marine Regiment and some additional support units), 137 vehicles, tents, aviation fuel, ammunition, rations, and engineering equipment to Guadalcanal. These crucial reinforcements allowed Vandegrift, beginning on September 19, to establish an unbroken line of defense around the Lunga perimeter. While covering this convoy, the aircraft carrier USS *Wasp* was sunk by the Japanese submarine *I-19* southeast of Guadalcanal, temporarily leaving only one Allied aircraft carrier (USS *Hornet*) in operation in the South Pacific area.<sup>[66]</sup> Vandegrift also made some changes in the senior leadership of his combat units, transferring off the island several officers who did not meet his performance standards, and promoting junior officers who had proven themselves to take their places. One of these was the recently promoted Colonel Merritt Edson, who was placed in command of the 5th Marine Regiment.<sup>[67]</sup>



The U.S. carrier *Wasp* burns after being hit by Japanese submarine torpedoes on September 15.

A lull occurred in the air war over Guadalcanal, with no Japanese air raids occurring between September 14 and September 27 due to bad weather, during which both sides reinforced their respective air units. The Japanese delivered 85 fighters and bombers to their air units at Rabaul while the U.S. brought 23 fighters and attack aircraft to Henderson Field. On September 20, the Japanese counted 117 total aircraft at Rabaul while the Allies tallied 71 aircraft at Henderson Field.<sup>[68]</sup> The air war resumed with a Japanese air raid on Guadalcanal on September 27, which was contested by U.S. Navy and Marine fighters from Henderson Field.<sup>[69]</sup>

The Japanese immediately began to prepare for their next attempt to recapture Henderson Field. The 3rd Battalion, 4th (Aoba) Infantry Regiment had landed at Kamimbo Bay on the western end of Guadalcanal on September 11, too late to join Kawaguchi's attack. By now, though, the battalion had joined Oka's forces near the Matanikau. Tokyo Express runs by destroyers on September 14, 20, 21, and 24 brought food and ammunition, as well as 280 men from the 1st Battalion, Aoba Regiment, to Kamimbo on Guadalcanal. Meanwhile, the Japanese 2nd and 38th Infantry Divisions were transported from the Dutch East Indies to Rabaul beginning on September 13. The Japanese planned to transport a total of 17,500 troops from these two divisions to Guadalcanal to take part in the next major attack on the Lunga Perimeter, set for October 20, 1942.<sup>[70]</sup>

## Actions along the Matanikau

Vandegrift and his staff were aware that Kawaguchi's troops had retreated to the area west of the Matanikau and that numerous groups of Japanese stragglers were scattered throughout the area between the Lunga Perimeter and the Matanikau River. Vandegrift, therefore, decided to conduct another series of small unit operations around the Matanikau Valley. The purpose of these operations was to mop up the scattered groups of Japanese troops east of the Matanikau and to keep the main body of Japanese soldiers off-balance to prevent them from consolidating their positions so close to the main Marine defenses at Lunga Point.<sup>[71]</sup>

The first U.S. Marine operation and attempt to attack Japanese forces west of the Matanikau, conducted between September 23 and 27 by elements of three U.S. Marine battalions, was repulsed by Kawaguchi's troops under Akinosuke Oka's local command. During the action, three Marine companies were surrounded by Japanese forces near Point Cruz west of the Matanikau, took heavy losses, and barely escaped with assistance from the destroyer USS *Monssen* (DD-436) and landing craft manned by U.S. Coast Guard personnel.<sup>[72]</sup>

In the second action between October 6 and 9, a larger force of Marines successfully crossed the Matanikau River, attacked newly landed Japanese forces from the 2nd Infantry Division under the command of generals Masao Maruyama and Yumio Nasu, and inflicted heavy losses on the Japanese 4th Infantry Regiment. The second action forced the Japanese to retreat from their positions east of the Matanikau and hindered Japanese preparations for their planned major offensive on the U.S. Lunga defenses.<sup>[73]</sup>

Between October 9 and 11 the U.S. 1st Battalion 2nd Marines raided two small Japanese outposts about 30 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) east of the Lunga perimeter at Gurabusu and Koilotumaria near Aola Bay. The raids killed 35 Japanese at a cost of 17 Marines and three U.S. Navy personnel killed.<sup>[74]</sup>



A U.S. Marine patrol crosses the Matanikau River in September 1942.

## Battle of Cape Esperance

Throughout the last week of September and the first week of October, Tokyo Express runs delivered troops from the Japanese 2nd Infantry Division to Guadalcanal. The Japanese Navy promised to support the Army's planned offensive by not only delivering the necessary troops, equipment, and supplies to the island, but by stepping-up air attacks on Henderson Field and sending warships to bombard the airfield.<sup>[75]</sup>



U.S. cruiser *Helena*, part of Task Force 64 under Norman Scott.

In the meantime, Millard F. Harmon, commander of United States Army forces in the South Pacific, convinced Ghormley that U.S. Marine forces on Guadalcanal needed to be reinforced immediately if the Allies were to successfully defend the island from the next, expected Japanese offensive. Thus, on October 8, the 2,837 men of the 164th Infantry Regiment from the U.S. Army's Americal Division boarded ships at New Caledonia for the trip to Guadalcanal with a projected arrival date of October 13. To protect the transports carrying the 164th to Guadalcanal, Ghormley ordered Task Force 64, consisting of four cruisers and five destroyers under U.S. Rear Admiral Norman

Scott, to intercept and combat any Japanese ships that approached Guadalcanal and threatened the arrival of the transport convoy.<sup>[76]</sup>

Mikawa's 8th Fleet staff scheduled a large and important Express run for the night of October 11. Two seaplane tenders and six destroyers were to deliver 728 soldiers plus artillery and ammunition to Guadalcanal. At the same time but in a separate operation three heavy cruisers and two destroyers under the command of Rear Admiral Aritomo Gotō were to bombard Henderson Field with special explosive shells with the object of destroying the CAF and the airfield's facilities. Because U.S. Navy warships had yet to attempt to interdict any Tokyo Express missions to Guadalcanal, the Japanese were not expecting any opposition from Allied naval surface forces that night.<sup>[77]</sup>

Just before midnight, Scott's warships detected Gotō's force on radar near the entrance to the strait between Savo Island and Guadalcanal. Scott's force was in a position to cross the T of Gotō's unsuspecting formation. Opening fire, Scott's warships sank one of Gotō's cruisers and one of his destroyers, heavily damaged another cruiser, mortally wounded Gotō, and forced the rest of Gotō's warships to abandon the bombardment mission and retreat. During the exchange of gunfire, one of Scott's destroyers was sunk and one cruiser and another destroyer were heavily damaged. In the meantime, the Japanese supply convoy successfully completed unloading at Guadalcanal and began its return journey without being discovered by Scott's force.<sup>[78]</sup> Later on the morning of October 12, four Japanese destroyers from the supply convoy turned back to assist Gotō's retreating, damaged warships. Air attacks by CAF aircraft from Henderson Field sank two of these destroyers later that day. The convoy of U.S. Army troops reached Guadalcanal as scheduled the next day and successfully delivered its cargo and passengers to the island.<sup>[79]</sup>

## Battleship bombardment of Henderson Field

In spite of the U.S. victory off Cape Esperance, the Japanese continued with plans and preparations for their large offensive scheduled for later in October. The Japanese decided to risk a one-time departure from their usual practice of only using fast warships to deliver their men and materiel to the island. On October 13, a convoy comprising six cargo ships with eight screening destroyers departed the Shortland Islands for Guadalcanal. The convoy carried 4,500 troops from the 16th and 230th Infantry Regiments, some naval marines, two batteries of heavy artillery, and one company of tanks.<sup>[80]</sup>



Japanese battleship *Haruna*

To protect the approaching convoy from attack by CAF aircraft, Yamamoto sent two battleships from Truk to bombard Henderson Field. At 01:33 on October 14, *Kongō* and *Haruna*, escorted by one light cruiser and nine destroyers, reached Guadalcanal and opened fire on Henderson Field from a distance of 16000 metres (**unknown operator: u'strong'** yd). Over the next one hour and 23 minutes, the two battleships fired 973 14-inch (**unknown operator: u'strong'** mm) shells into the Lunga perimeter, most of them falling in and around the 2200 metres (**unknown operator: u'strong'** yd) square area of the airfield. Many of the shells were fragmentation shells, specifically

designed to destroy land targets. The bombardment heavily damaged both runways, burned almost all of the available aviation fuel, destroyed 48 of the CAF's 90 aircraft, and killed 41 men, including six CAF pilots. The battleship force immediately returned to Truk.<sup>[81]</sup>

In spite of the heavy damage, Henderson personnel were able to restore one of the runways to operational condition within a few hours. Seventeen SBDs and 20 Wildcats at Espiritu Santo were quickly flown to Henderson and U.S. Army and Marine transport aircraft began to shuttle aviation gasoline from Espiritu Santo to Guadalcanal. Now aware of the approach of the large Japanese reinforcement convoy, the U.S. desperately sought some way to interdict the convoy before it could reach Guadalcanal. Using fuel drained from destroyed aircraft and from a cache in the nearby jungle, the CAF attacked the convoy twice on the 14th, but caused no damage.<sup>[82]</sup>

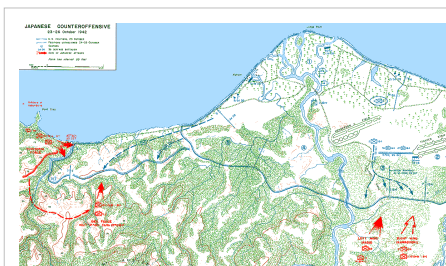
The Japanese convoy reached Tassafaronga on Guadalcanal at midnight on October 14 and began unloading. Throughout the day of October 15, a string of CAF aircraft from Henderson bombed and strafed the unloading convoy, destroying three of the cargo ships. The remainder of the convoy departed that night, having unloaded all of the troops and about two-thirds of the supplies and equipment. Several Japanese heavy cruisers also bombarded Henderson on the nights of October 14 and 15, destroying a few additional CAF aircraft, but failing to cause significant further damage to the airfield.<sup>[83]</sup>



Japanese cargo ship destroyed at Tassafaronga by CAF aircraft on October 15.

## Battle for Henderson Field

Between October 1 and October 17, the Japanese delivered 15,000 troops to Guadalcanal, giving Hyakutake 20,000 total troops to employ for his planned offensive. Because of the loss of their positions on the east side of the Matanikau, the Japanese decided that an attack on the U.S. defenses along the coast would be prohibitively difficult. Therefore, Hyakutake decided that the main thrust of his planned attack would be from south of Henderson Field. His 2nd Division (augmented by troops from the 38th Division), under Lieutenant General Masao Maruyama and comprising 7,000 soldiers in three infantry regiments of three battalions each was ordered to march through the jungle and attack the American defences from the south near the east bank of the Lunga River.<sup>[84]</sup> The date of the attack was set for October 22, then changed to October 23. To distract the Americans from the planned attack from the south, Hyakutake's heavy artillery plus five battalions of infantry (about 2,900 men) under Major General Tadashi Sumiyoshi were to attack the American defenses from the west along the coastal corridor. The Japanese estimated that there were 10,000 American troops on the island, when in fact there were about 23,000.<sup>[85]</sup>



Map of the battle, October 23 – October 26.

Sumiyoshi's forces attack in the west at the Matanikau (left) while Maruyama's 2nd division attacks the Lunga perimeter from the south (right)

On October 12, a company of Japanese engineers began to break a trail, called the "Maruyama Road", from the Matanikau towards the southern portion of the U.S. Lunga perimeter. The 15 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) long trail traversed some of the most difficult terrain on Guadalcanal, including numerous rivers and streams, deep, muddy ravines, steep ridges, and dense jungle. Between October 16 and October 18, the 2nd Division began their march along the Maruyama Road.<sup>[86]</sup>

By October 23, Maruyama's forces still struggled through the jungle to reach the American lines. That evening, after learning that his forces had yet to reach their attack positions, Hyakutake postponed the attack to 19:00 on October 24. The Americans remained completely unaware of the approach of Maruyama's forces.<sup>[87]</sup>

Sumiyoshi was informed by Hyakutake's staff of the postponement of the offensive to October 24, but was unable to contact his troops to inform them of the delay. Thus, at dusk on October 23, two battalions of the 4th Infantry Regiment and the nine tanks of the 1st Independent Tank Company launched attacks on the U.S. Marine defenses at the mouth of the Matanikau. U.S. Marine artillery, cannon, and small arms fire repulsed the attacks, destroying all the tanks and killing many of the Japanese soldiers while suffering only light casualties.<sup>[88]</sup>

Finally, late on October 24 Maruyama's forces reached the U.S. Lunga perimeter. Over two consecutive nights Maruyama's forces conducted numerous, unsuccessful frontal assaults on positions defended by troops of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines under Lieutenant Colonel Chesty Puller and the U.S. Army's 3rd Battalion, 164th Infantry Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert Hall. U.S. Marine and Army units armed with rifles, machine guns, mortars, artillery, including direct canister fire from 37 mm anti-tank guns "wrought terrible carnage" on the Japanese.<sup>[89]</sup> A few small groups of Japanese broke through the American defenses, but were all hunted down and



killed over the next several days. More than 1,500 of Maruyama's troops were killed in the attacks while the Americans lost about 60 killed. Over the same two days American aircraft from Henderson Field defended against attacks by Japanese aircraft and ships, destroying 14 aircraft and sinking a light cruiser.<sup>[90]</sup>

Further Japanese attacks near the Matanikau on October 26 were also repulsed with heavy losses for the Japanese. As a result, by 08:00 on October 26, Hyakutake called off any further attacks and ordered his forces to retreat. About half of Maruyama's survivors were ordered to retreat back to the upper Matanikau Valley while the 230th Infantry Regiment under Colonel Toshinari Shōji was told to head for Koli Point, east of the Lunga perimeter. Leading elements of the 2nd Division reached the 17th Army headquarters area at Kokumbona, west of the Matanikau on November 4. The same day, Shoji's unit reached Koli Point and made camp. Decimated by battle deaths, combat injuries, malnutrition, and tropical diseases, the 2nd Division was incapable of further offensive action and fought as a defensive force along the coast for the rest of the campaign. In total the Japanese lost 2,200 – 3,000 troops in the battle while the Americans lost around 80 killed.<sup>[91]</sup>



Dead soldiers from the Japanese 2nd Division cover the battlefield after the failed assaults on October 25–26

## Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands

At the same time that Hyakutake's troops were attacking the Lunga perimeter, Japanese aircraft carriers and other large warships under the overall direction of Isoroku Yamamoto moved into a position near the southern Solomon Islands. From this location, the Japanese naval forces hoped to engage and decisively defeat any Allied (primarily U.S.) naval forces, especially carrier forces, that responded to Hyakutake's ground offensive. Allied naval carrier forces in the area, now under the overall command of William Halsey, Jr., also hoped to meet the Japanese naval forces in battle. Nimitz had replaced Ghormley with Halsey on October 18 after concluding that Ghormley had become too pessimistic and myopic to effectively continue leading Allied forces in the South Pacific area.<sup>[92]</sup>

The two opposing carrier forces confronted each other on the morning of October 26, in what became known as the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands. After an exchange of carrier air attacks, Allied surface ships were forced to retreat from the battle area with the loss of one carrier sunk (*Hornet*) and another (*Enterprise*) heavily damaged. The participating Japanese carrier forces, however, also retired because of high aircraft and aircrew losses and significant damage to two carriers. Although an apparent tactical victory for the Japanese in terms of ships sunk and damaged, the loss by the Japanese of many irreplaceable, veteran aircrews provided a long-term strategic advantage for the Allies, whose aircrew losses in the battle were relatively low. The Japanese carriers played no further significant role in the campaign.<sup>[93]</sup>



USS *Hornet* is torpedeed and fatally damaged by a Japanese carrier aircraft on October 26.

## November land actions

Further information: Matanikau Offensive, Koli Point action, and Carlson's patrol

In order to exploit the victory in the Battle for Henderson Field, Vandegrift sent six Marine battalions, later joined by one U.S. Army battalion, on an offensive west of the Matanikau. The operation was commanded by Merritt Edson and its goal was to capture Kokumbona, headquarters of the 17th Army, west of Point Cruz. Defending the Point Cruz area were Japanese army troops from the 4th Infantry Regiment commanded by Nomasu Nakaguma. The 4th Infantry was severely understrength because of battle damage, tropical disease, and malnutrition.<sup>[94]</sup>





U.S. Marines drag the bodies of dead Japanese soldiers from their bunker in the Point Cruz area after the battle in early November.

The American offensive began on November 1 and, after some difficulty, succeeded in destroying Japanese forces defending the Point Cruz area by November 3, including rear echelon troops sent to reinforce Nakaguma's battered regiment. The Americans appeared to be on the verge of breaking through the Japanese defenses and capturing Kokumbona. At this time, however, other American forces discovered and engaged newly landed Japanese troops near Koli Point on the eastern side of the Lunga perimeter. To counter this new threat, Vandegrift temporarily halted the Matanikau offensive on November 4. The Americans suffered 71 and the Japanese around 400 killed in the offensive.<sup>[95]</sup>

At Koli Point early in the morning November 3, five Japanese destroyers delivered 300 army troops to support Shōji and his troops who were en route to Koli Point after the Battle for Henderson Field. Having learned of the planned landing, Vandegrift sent a battalion of Marines under Herman H. Hanneken to intercept the Japanese at Koli. Soon after landing, the Japanese soldiers encountered and drove Hanneken's battalion back towards the Lunga perimeter. In response, Vandegrift ordered Puller's Marine battalion plus two of the 164th infantry battalions, along with Hanneken's battalion, to move towards Koli Point to attack the Japanese forces there.<sup>[96]</sup>

As the American troops began to move, Shōji and his soldiers began to arrive at Koli Point. Beginning on November 8, the American troops attempted to encircle Shōji's forces at Gavaga Creek near Koli Point. Meanwhile, Hyakutake ordered Shōji to abandon his positions at Koli and rejoin Japanese forces at Kokumbona in the Matanikau area. A gap existed by way of a swampy creek in the southern side of the American lines. Between November 9 and 11, Shōji and between 2,000 and 3,000 of his men escaped into the jungle to the south. On November 12, the Americans completely overran and killed all the remaining Japanese soldiers left in the pocket. The Americans counted the bodies of 450–475 Japanese dead in the Koli Point area and captured most of Shōji's heavy weapons and provisions. The American forces suffered 40 killed and 120 wounded in the operation.<sup>[97]</sup>

Meanwhile, on November 4, two companies from the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Evans Carlson landed by boat at Aola Bay, 40 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) east of Lunga Point. Carlson's raiders, along with troops from the U.S. Army's 147th Infantry Regiment, were to provide security for 500 Seabees as they attempted to construct an airfield at that location. Halsey, acting on a recommendation by Turner, had approved the Aola Bay airfield construction effort. The Aola airfield construction effort was later abandoned at the end of November because of unsuitable terrain.<sup>[98]</sup>



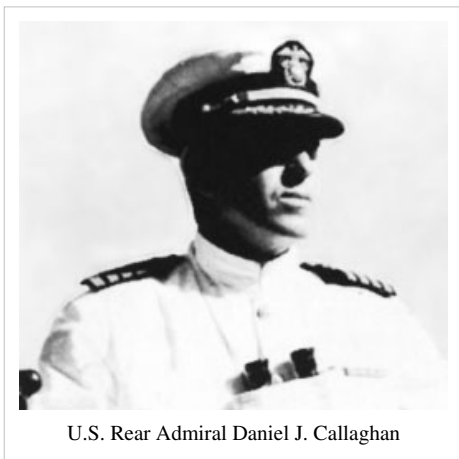
Carlson's raiders come ashore at Aola Bay on November 4

On November 5, Vandegrift ordered Carlson to take his raiders, march overland from Aola, and attack any of Shōji's forces that had escaped from Koli Point. With the rest of the companies from his battalion, which arrived a few days later, Carlson and his troops set off on a 29-day patrol from Aola to the Lunga perimeter. During the patrol, the raiders fought several battles with Shōji's retreating forces, killing almost 500 of them, while suffering 16 killed themselves. In addition to the losses sustained from attacks by Carlson's raiders, tropical diseases and a lack of food felled many more of Shōji's men. By the time Shōji's forces reached the Lunga River in mid-November, about halfway to the Matanikau, only 1,300 men remained with the main body. When Shōji reached the 17th Army positions west of the Matanikau, only 700 to 800 survivors were still with him. Most of the survivors from Shōji's force joined other Japanese units defending the Mount Austen and upper Matanikau River area.<sup>[99]</sup>

Tokyo Express runs on November 5, 7, and 9, delivered additional troops from the Japanese 38th Infantry Division, including most of the 228th Infantry Regiment to Guadalcanal. These fresh troops were quickly emplaced in the Point Cruz and Matanikau area and helped successfully resist further attacks by American forces on November 10 and 18. The Americans and Japanese remained facing each other along a line just west of Point Cruz for the next six weeks.<sup>[100]</sup>

## Naval Battle of Guadalcanal

After the defeat in the Battle for Henderson Field, the IJA planned to try again to retake the airfield in November 1942, but further reinforcements were needed before the operation could proceed. The IJA requested assistance from Yamamoto to deliver the needed reinforcements to the island and to support the next offensive. Yamamoto provided 11 large transport ships to carry the remaining 7,000 troops from the 38th Infantry Division, their ammunition, food, and heavy equipment from Rabaul to Guadalcanal. He also provided a warship support force that included two battleships. The two battleships, *Hiei* and *Kirishima*, equipped with special fragmentation shells, were to bombard Henderson Field on the night of November 12–13 and destroy it and the aircraft stationed there in order to allow the slow, heavy transports to reach Guadalcanal and unload safely the next day.<sup>[101]</sup> The warship force was commanded from *Hiei* by recently promoted Vice Admiral Hiroaki Abe.<sup>[102]</sup>



U.S. Rear Admiral Daniel J. Callaghan

In early November, Allied intelligence learned that the Japanese were preparing again to try to retake Henderson Field.<sup>[103]</sup> Therefore, the U.S. sent Task Force 67, a large reinforcement and resupply convoy carrying Marine replacements, two U.S. Army infantry battalions, and ammunition and food, commanded by Turner, to Guadalcanal on November 11. The supply ships were protected by two task groups, commanded by Rear Admirals Daniel J. Callaghan and Norman Scott, and aircraft from Henderson Field.<sup>[104]</sup> The ships were attacked several times on November 11 and 12 by Japanese aircraft from Rabaul staging through an air base at Buin, Bougainville, but most were unloaded without serious damage.<sup>[105]</sup>

U.S. reconnaissance aircraft spotted the approach of Abe's bombardment force and passed a warning to the Allied command.<sup>[106]</sup> Thus warned, Turner detached all usable combat ships under Callaghan to protect the troops ashore from the expected Japanese naval attack and troop landing and ordered the supply ships at Guadalcanal to depart by early evening November 12.<sup>[107]</sup> Callaghan's force comprised two heavy cruisers, three light cruisers, and eight destroyers.<sup>[108]</sup>

Around 01:30 on November 13, Callaghan's force intercepted Abe's bombardment group between Guadalcanal and Savo Island. In addition to the two battleships, Abe's force included one light cruiser and 11 destroyers. In the pitch darkness,<sup>[109]</sup> the two warship forces intermingled before opening fire at unusually close quarters. In the resulting mêlée, Abe's warships sank or severely damaged all but one cruiser and one destroyer in Callaghan's force and both Callaghan and Scott were killed. Two Japanese destroyers were sunk and another destroyer and *Hiei* heavily damaged. In spite of his defeat of Callaghan's force, Abe ordered his warships to retire without bombarding Henderson Field. *Hiei* sank later that day after repeated air attacks by CAF aircraft and aircraft from the U.S. carrier *Enterprise*. Because of Abe's failure to neutralize Henderson Field, Yamamoto ordered the troop transport convoy, under the command of Raizo Tanaka and located near the Shortland Islands, to wait an additional day before heading towards Guadalcanal. Yamamoto ordered Nobutake Kondō to assemble another bombardment force using warships from Truk and Abe's force to attack Henderson Field on November 15.<sup>[110]</sup>

In the meantime, around 02:00 on November 14, a cruiser and destroyer force under Gunichi Mikawa from Rabaul conducted an unopposed bombardment of Henderson Field. The bombardment caused some damage but failed to put the airfield or most of its aircraft out of operation. As Mikawa's force retired towards Rabaul, Tanaka's transport

convoy, trusting that Henderson Field was now destroyed or heavily damaged, began its run down the slot towards Guadalcanal. Throughout the day of November 14, aircraft from Henderson Field and *Enterprise* attacked Mikawa's and Tanaka's ships, sinking one heavy cruiser and seven of the transports. Most of the troops were rescued from the transports by Tanaka's escorting destroyers and returned to the Shortlands. After dark, Tanaka and the remaining four transports continued towards Guadalcanal as Kondo's force approached to bombard Henderson Field.<sup>[111]</sup>

In order to intercept Kondo's force, Halsey, who was low on undamaged ships, detached two battleships, *Washington* and *South Dakota*, and four destroyers from the *Enterprise* task force. The U.S. force, under the command of Willis A. Lee aboard *Washington*, reached Guadalcanal and Savo Island just before midnight on November 14, shortly before Kondo's bombardment force arrived. Kondo's force consisted of *Kirishima* plus two heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and nine destroyers. After the two forces made contact, Kondo's force quickly sank three of the U.S. destroyers and heavily damaged the fourth. The Japanese warships then sighted, opened fire, and damaged *South Dakota*. As Kondo's warships concentrated on *South Dakota*, *Washington* approached the Japanese ships unobserved and opened fire on *Kirishima*, hitting the Japanese battleship repeatedly and causing fatal damage. After fruitlessly chasing *Washington* towards the Russell Islands, Kondo ordered his warships to retire without bombarding Henderson Field. One of Kondo's destroyers was also sunk during the engagement.<sup>[112]</sup>



The U.S. battleship *Washington* fires at the Japanese battleship *Kirishima*

As Kondo's ships retired, the four Japanese transports beached themselves near Tassafaronga on Guadalcanal at 04:00 and quickly began unloading. At 05:55, U.S. aircraft and artillery began attacking the beached transports, destroying all four transports along with most of the supplies that they carried. Only 2,000–3,000 of the army troops made it ashore. Because of the failure to deliver most of the troops and supplies, the Japanese were forced to cancel their planned November offensive on Henderson Field making the results of the battle a significant strategic victory for the Allies and marking the beginning of the end of Japanese attempts to retake Henderson Field.<sup>[113]</sup>

On November 26, Japanese Lieutenant General Hitoshi Imamura took command of the newly formed Eighth Area Army at Rabaul. The new command encompassed both Hyakutake's 17th Army and the 18th Army in New Guinea. One of Imamura's first priorities upon assuming command was the continuation of the attempts to retake Henderson Field and Guadalcanal. The Allied offensive at Buna in New Guinea, however, changed Imamura's priorities. Because the Allied attempt to take Buna was considered a more severe threat to Rabaul, Imamura postponed further major reinforcement efforts to Guadalcanal to concentrate on the situation in New Guinea.<sup>[114]</sup>

## Battle of Tassafaronga

The Japanese continued to experience problems in delivering sufficient supplies to sustain their troops on Guadalcanal. Attempts to use only submarines the last two weeks in November failed to provide sufficient food for Hyakutake's forces. A separate attempt to establish bases in the central Solomons to facilitate barge convoys to Guadalcanal also failed because of destructive Allied air attacks. On November 26, the 17th Army notified Imamura that it faced a critical food crisis. Some front-line units had not been resupplied for six days and even the rear-area troops were on one-third rations. The situation forced the Japanese to return to using destroyers to deliver the necessary supplies.<sup>[115]</sup>



Eighth Fleet personnel devised a plan to help reduce the exposure of destroyers delivering supplies to Guadalcanal. Large oil or gas drums were cleaned and filled with medical supplies and food, with enough air space to provide buoyancy, and strung together with rope. When the destroyers arrived at Guadalcanal they would make a sharp turn and the drums would be cut loose and a swimmer or boat from shore could pick up the buoyed end of a rope and return it to the beach, where the soldiers could haul in the supplies.<sup>[116]</sup>

The Eighth Fleet's Guadalcanal Reinforcement Unit (the Tokyo Express), currently commanded by Raizo Tanaka, was tasked by Mikawa with making the first of five scheduled runs to Tassafaronga on Guadalcanal using the drum method on the night of November 30. Tanaka's unit was centered around eight destroyers, with six destroyers assigned to carry between 200 to 240 drums of supplies apiece.<sup>[117]</sup> Notified by intelligence sources of the Japanese supply attempt, Halsey ordered the newly formed Task Force 67, comprising four

cruisers and four destroyers under the command of U.S. Rear Admiral Carleton H. Wright, to intercept Tanaka's force off Guadalcanal. Two additional destroyers joined Wright's force en route to Guadalcanal from Espiritu Santo during the day of November 30.<sup>[118]</sup>

At 22:40 on November 30, Tanaka's force arrived off Guadalcanal and prepared to unload the supply barrels. Meanwhile, Wright's warships were approaching through Ironbottom Sound from the opposite direction. Wright's destroyers detected Tanaka's force on radar and the destroyer commander requested permission to attack with torpedoes. Wright waited four minutes before giving permission, allowing Tanaka's force to escape from an optimum firing setup. All of the American torpedoes missed their targets. At the same time, Wright's cruisers opened fire, quickly hitting and destroying one of the Japanese guard destroyers. The rest of Tanaka's warships abandoned the supply mission, increased speed, turned, and launched a total of 44 torpedoes in the direction of Wright's cruisers.<sup>[119]</sup>

The Japanese torpedoes hit and sank the U.S. cruiser *Northampton* and heavily damaged the cruisers *Minneapolis*, *New Orleans*, and *Pensacola*. The rest of Tanaka's destroyers escaped without damage, but failed to deliver any of the provisions to Guadalcanal.<sup>[120]</sup>

By December 7, 1942, Hyakutake's forces were losing about 50 men each day from malnutrition, disease, and Allied ground or air attacks.<sup>[121]</sup> Further attempts by Tanaka's destroyer forces to deliver provisions on December 3, December 7, and December 11, failed to alleviate the crisis, and one of Tanaka's destroyers was sunk by a U.S. PT boat torpedo.<sup>[122]</sup>

## Japanese decision to withdraw

On December 12, the Japanese Navy proposed that Guadalcanal be abandoned. At the same time, several army staff officers at the Imperial General Headquarters (IGH) also suggested that further efforts to retake Guadalcanal would be impossible. A delegation, led by IJA Colonel Joichiro Sanada, chief of the IGH's operations section, visited Rabaul on December 19 and consulted Imamura and his staff. Upon the delegation's return to Tokyo, Sanada recommended that Guadalcanal be abandoned. The IGH's top leaders agreed with Sanada's recommendation on December 26 and ordered their staffs to begin drafting plans for a withdrawal from Guadalcanal, establishment of a new defense line in the central Solomons, and a shifting of priorities and resources to the campaign in New Guinea.<sup>[123]</sup>

On December 28, General Hajime Sugiyama and Admiral Osami Nagano personally informed Emperor Hirohito of the decision to withdraw from Guadalcanal. On December 31, the Emperor formally endorsed the decision. The Japanese secretly began to prepare for the evacuation, called Operation Ke, scheduled to begin during the latter part

of January 1943.<sup>[124]</sup>

## Battle of Mount Austen, the Galloping Horse, and the Sea Horse

By December, the weary 1st Marine Division was withdrawn for recuperation, and over the course of the next month the U.S. XIV Corps took over operations on the island. This corps consisted of the 2nd Marine Division and the U.S. Army's 25th Infantry and Americal Divisions. U.S. Army Major General Alexander Patch replaced Vandegrift as commander of Allied forces on Guadalcanal, which by January totaled just over 50,000 men.<sup>[125]</sup>

On December 18, Allied (mainly U.S. Army) forces began attacking Japanese positions on Mount Austen. A strong Japanese fortified position, called the Gifu, stymied the attacks and the Americans were forced to temporarily halt their offensive on January 4.<sup>[126]</sup>

The Allies renewed the offensive on January 10, reattacking the Japanese on Mount Austen as well as on two nearby ridges called the Seahorse and the Galloping Horse. After some difficulty, the Allies captured all three by January 23. At the same time, U.S. Marines advanced along the north coast of the island, making significant gains. The Americans lost about 250 killed in the operation while the Japanese suffered around 3,000 killed—about 12 to 1 in the Americans' favor.<sup>[127]</sup>



U.S. Army Major General Alexander Patch (center) succeeds Vandegrift (right) on December 9, 1942.

## Ke evacuation

On January 14, a Tokyo Express run delivered a battalion of troops to act as a rear guard for the *Ke* evacuation. A staff officer from Rabaul accompanied the troops to notify Hyakutake of the decision to withdraw. At the same time, Japanese warships and aircraft moved into position around the Rabaul and Bougainville areas in preparation to execute the withdrawal operation. Allied intelligence detected the Japanese movements, but misinterpreted them as preparations for another attempt to retake Henderson Field and Guadalcanal.<sup>[128]</sup>



USS *Chicago* sinking on January 30 during the Battle of Rennell Island.

Patch, wary of what he thought to be an imminent Japanese offensive, committed only a relatively small portion of his troops to continue a slow-moving offensive against Hyakutake's forces. On January 29, Halsey, acting on the same intelligence, sent a resupply convoy to Guadalcanal screened by a cruiser task force. Sighting the cruiser task force, Japanese naval torpedo bombers attacked the task force that same evening and heavily damaged the U.S. cruiser *Chicago*. The next day, more torpedo aircraft attacked and sank *Chicago*. Halsey ordered the remainder of the task force to return to base and directed the rest of his naval forces to take station in the Coral Sea, south of Guadalcanal, to be ready to counter the perceived Japanese offensive.<sup>[129]</sup>

In the meantime, the Japanese 17th Army withdrew to the west coast of Guadalcanal while rear guard units checked the American offensive. On the night of February 1, 20 destroyers from Mikawa's 8th Fleet under Shintaro Hashimoto successfully extracted 4,935 soldiers, mainly from the 38th Division, from the island. The Japanese and the Americans each lost a destroyer from air and naval attacks related to the evacuation mission.<sup>[130]</sup>

On the nights of February 4 and 7, Hashimoto and his destroyers completed the evacuation of most of the remaining Japanese forces from Guadalcanal. Apart from some air attacks, Allied forces, still anticipating a large Japanese

offensive, did not attempt to interdict Hashimoto's evacuation runs. In total, the Japanese successfully evacuated 10,652 men from Guadalcanal. On February 9, Patch realized that the Japanese were gone and declared Guadalcanal secure for Allied forces, ending the campaign.<sup>[131]</sup>

## Aftermath

After the Japanese withdrawal, Guadalcanal and Tulagi were developed into major bases supporting the Allied advance further up the Solomon Islands chain. In addition to Henderson Field, two additional fighter runways were constructed at Lunga Point and a bomber airfield was built at Koli Point. Extensive naval port and logistics facilities were established at Guadalcanal, Tulagi, and Florida. The anchorage around Tulagi became an important advanced base for Allied warships and transport ships supporting the Solomon Islands Campaign. Major ground units were staged through large encampments and barracks on Guadalcanal before deployment further up the Solomons.<sup>[132]</sup>



Allied commanders assemble on Guadalcanal in August 1943 to plan the next Allied offensive against the Japanese in the Solomons as part of Operation Cartwheel.

After Guadalcanal the Japanese were clearly on the defensive in the Pacific. The constant pressure to reinforce Guadalcanal had weakened Japanese efforts in other theaters, contributing to a successful Australian and American counteroffensive in New Guinea which culminated in the capture of the key bases of Buna and Gona in early 1943. The Allies had gained a strategic initiative which they never relinquished. In June, the Allies launched Operation Cartwheel, which, after modification in August, 1943, formalized the strategy of isolating Rabaul and cutting its sea lines of communication. The subsequent successful neutralization of Rabaul and the forces centered there facilitated the South West Pacific campaign under General Douglas MacArthur and Central Pacific island hopping campaign under Admiral Chester Nimitz, with both efforts successfully advancing toward Japan. The remaining Japanese defenses in the South Pacific area were then either destroyed or bypassed by Allied forces as the war progressed to its ultimate conclusion.<sup>[133]</sup>

## Significance

### Resources

The Battle of Guadalcanal was one of the first prolonged campaigns in the Pacific, alongside the related and concurrent Solomon Islands campaign. Both campaigns were battles that strained the logistical capabilities of the combatant nations involved. For the U.S., this need prompted the development of effective combat air transport for the first time. A failure to achieve air superiority forced Japan to rely on reinforcement by barges, destroyers, and submarines, with very uneven results. Early in the campaign, the Americans were hindered by a lack of resources, as they suffered heavy losses in cruisers and carriers, with replacements from ramped-up shipbuilding programs still months away from materializing.<sup>[134]</sup>





Henderson Field in August 1944.

The U.S. Navy suffered such high personnel losses during the campaign that it refused to publicly release total casualty figures for years. However, as the campaign continued, and the American public became more and more aware of the plight and perceived heroism of the American forces on Guadalcanal, more forces were dispatched to the area. This spelled trouble for Japan as its military-industrial complex was unable to match the output of American industry and manpower. Thus, as the campaign wore on the Japanese were losing irreplaceable units while the Americans were rapidly replacing and even augmenting their forces.<sup>[134]</sup>

The Guadalcanal campaign was costly to Japan strategically and in material losses and manpower. Roughly 25,000 experienced ground troops were killed during the campaign. The drain on resources directly contributed to Japan's failure to achieve its objectives in the New Guinea campaign. Japan also lost control of the southern Solomons and the ability to interdict Allied shipping to Australia. Japan's major base at Rabaul was now further directly threatened by Allied air power. Most importantly, scarce Japanese land, air, and naval forces had disappeared forever into the Guadalcanal jungle and surrounding sea. The Japanese could not replace the aircraft and ships destroyed and sunk in this campaign, as well as their highly trained and veteran crews, especially the naval aircrews, nearly as quickly as the Allies.<sup>[135]</sup>

## Strategic

After the victory at the Battle of Midway America was able to establish naval parity in the Pacific. However, this fact alone did not change the direction of the war. It was only after the Allied victories in Guadalcanal and New Guinea that the Japanese offensive thrust was ended and the strategic initiative passed to the Allies, as it proved, permanently. The Guadalcanal Campaign ended all Japanese expansion attempts and placed the Allies in a position of clear supremacy.<sup>[136]</sup> It thus can be argued that this Allied victory was the first step in a long string of successes that eventually led to the surrender of Japan and the occupation of the Japanese home islands.<sup>[135]</sup>

The "Europe first" policy of the United States had initially only allowed for defensive actions against Japanese expansion, in order to focus resources on defeating Germany. However, Admiral King's argument for the Guadalcanal invasion, as well as its successful implementation, convinced President Franklin D. Roosevelt that the Pacific Theater could be pursued offensively as well.<sup>[137]</sup> By the end of 1942, it was clear that Japan had lost the Guadalcanal campaign, a serious blow to Japan's strategic plans for defense of their empire and an unanticipated defeat at the hands of the Americans.<sup>[138]</sup>

Perhaps as important as the military victory for the Allies was the psychological victory. On a level playing field, the Allies had beaten Japan's best land, air, and warship forces. After Guadalcanal, Allied personnel regarded the Japanese military with much less fear and awe than previously.

In addition, the Allies viewed the eventual outcome of the Pacific War with greatly increased optimism.<sup>[139]</sup>

Guadalcanal is no longer merely a name of an island in Japanese military history. It is the name of the graveyard of the Japanese army.

—Major General Kiyotake Kawaguchi, IJA  
Commander, 35th Infantry Brigade at Guadalcanal<sup>[140]</sup>

Beyond Kawaguchi, several Japanese political and military leaders, including Naoki Hoshino, Osami Nagano, and Torashirō Kawabe, stated shortly after the war that Guadalcanal was the decisive turning point in the conflict. Said



A dead Japanese soldier on Guadalcanal in January 1943.

Kawabe, "As for the turning point [of the war], when the positive action ceased or even became negative, it was, I feel, at Guadalcanal."<sup>[141]</sup>

## Notes

- [1] Murray, p. 169–195.
- [2] Murray, p. 196.
- [3] Loxton, p. 3.
- [4] Alexander, p. 72, Frank, p. 23–31, 129, 628; Smith, p. 5; Bullard, p. 119, Lundstrom, p. 39, Bullard, p. 127. The Japanese aircraft assigned to Guadalcanal were to come from the 26th Air Flotilla, then located at bases in the Central Pacific (Bullard).
- [5] Bowen, James. *Despite Pearl Harbor, America adopts a 'Germany First' strategy* (<http://www.pacificwar.org.au/GermanyFirst/GermanyFirst.html>). The Pacific War from Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal. Pacific War Historical Society. . Retrieved December 30, 2007.
- [6] Morison, p. 12, Frank, p. 15–16, Miller, *Cartwheel*, p. 5.
- [7] Murray, p. 199–200; Jersey, p. 85; and Lundstrom, p. 5.
- [8] Loxton, p. 5; and Miller, p. 11.
- [9] Frank, p. 35–37, 53.
- [10] Bullard, p. 122.
- [11] Morison, p. 15; and McGee, p. 20–21.
- [12] Frank, p. 57, 619–621.
- [13] Ken Burns: The War, Episode 1
- [14] McGee, p. 21, Bullard, pp. 125–126. Several patrol aircraft from Tulagi searched the very area where the Allied invasion convoy was moving, but missed seeing the Allied ships because of severe storms and heavy clouds (Bullard). Masaichiro Miyagawa, a Japanese defender stationed on Tanambogo who was captured by American forces (one of four Japanese out of 3,000 stationed in the area to survive the battle), wrote that on a daily basis four Japanese patrol planes were sent out from Florida Island in the shape of a fan, flying northeast, east, southeast and south of Florida Island to reconnoiter for enemy activity. Because of poor weather conditions, he writes that the invading Allied armada escaped detection, and that if the invasion fleet had been spotted a day or two prior to August 7, the Allied fleet, with its slow moving transports, most likely would have been destroyed (Guadalcanal Echoes, Volume 21, No. 1 Winter 2009/2010 Edition, page 8, (Publication of the Guadalcanal Campaign Veterans, [American veterans group])
- [15] Frank, p. 60; Jersey, p. 95. The landing force, designated Task Force 62, included six heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, 15 destroyers, 13 transports, six cargo ships, four destroyer transports, and five minesweepers.
- [16] Hammel, p. 46–47; and Lundstrom, p. 38.
- [17] Frank, p. 51.
- [18] Frank, p. 50. The IJN personnel included Japanese and Korean construction specialists as well as trained combat troops.
- [19] Shaw, p. 8–9; and McGee, p. 32–34.
- [20] Frank, p. 79. Approximately 80 Japanese personnel escaped to Florida Island, where they were found and killed by Marine patrols over the next two months.
- [21] Jersey, p. 113–115, 190, 350; Morison, p. 15; and Frank, p. 61–62 & 81.
- [22] Loxton, p. 90–103.
- [23] Frank, p. 80.
- [24] Hammel, p. 99; and Loxton, p. 104–5. Loxton, Frank (p. 94), and Morison (p. 28) contend Fletcher's fuel situation was not at all critical, but Fletcher implied it was in order to provide further justification for his withdrawal from the battle area.
- [25] Hammel, p. 100.
- [26] Morison, p. 31.
- [27] Hornfischer, p. 44–92
- [28] Morison, p. 19–59.
- [29] Smith, p. 14–15. At this time there were exactly 10,819 Marines on Guadalcanal (Frank, p. 125–127).
- [30] Smith, p. 16–17.
- [31] Shaw, p. 13.
- [32] Smith, p. 20, 35–36.
- [33] Zimmerman, p. 58–60; Smith, p. 35; and Jersey, p. 196–199. Goettge was one of the first killed. Only three made it back to the Lunga Point perimeter. Seven Japanese were killed in the skirmish. More details of the event are at: Clark, Jack, "Goettge Patrol ", *Pacific Wreck Database* (<http://www.pacificwrecks.com/people/veterans/clark.html#patrol>) and Broderson, Ben, "Franklin native recalls key WWII battle" ([http://www.franklinfavorite.com/articles/stories/200211/07/guadalcanal11-7-02\\_features.html](http://www.franklinfavorite.com/articles/stories/200211/07/guadalcanal11-7-02_features.html)).
- [34] Frank, p. 132–133; Jersey, p. 203; and Smith, p. 36–42. The 500 Japanese involved were from the 84th Guard Unit, 11th and 13th Construction Units, and the recently arrived 1st Camp Relief Unit. After this engagement, the Japanese naval personnel relocated deeper into the hills in the interior of the island.
- [35] Shaw, p. 18.
- [36] Frank, p. 147.

[37] Smith, p. 88; Evans, p. 158; and Frank, p. 141–143. The Ichiki regiment was named after its commanding officer and was part of the 7th Division from Hokkaido. The Aoba regiment, from the 2nd Division, took its name from Aoba Castle in Sendai, because most of the soldiers in the regiment were from Miyagi prefecture (Rottman, *Japanese Army*, p. 52). Ichiki's regiment had been assigned to invade and occupy Midway, but were on their way back to Japan after the invasion was cancelled following the Japanese defeat in the Battle of Midway. Although some histories state that Ichiki's regiment was at Truk, Raizo Tanaka, in Evans' book, states that he dropped off Ichiki's regiment at Guam after the Battle of Midway. Ichiki's regiment was subsequently loaded on ships for transport elsewhere but were rerouted to Truk after the Allied landings on Guadalcanal. Robert Leckie, who was at Guadalcanal, remembers the events of the Battle of the Tenaru in his book *Helmet For My Pillow*, "Everyone had forgotten the fight and was watching the carnage, when shouting swept up the line. A group of Japanese dashed along the opposite river edge, racing in our direction. Their appearance so surprised everyone that there were no shots." (Robert Leckie *Helmet For My Pillow* Bantam Books Trade Paperback Edition 2010 pp. 82–83)

[38] Steinberg, Rafael, *Island Fighting*, Time-Life Books (1978) p.30

[39] Frank, p. 156–158 & 681; and Smith, p. 43.

[40] Smith, p. 33–34.

[41] Zimmerman, p. 70; and Frank, p. 159.

[42] Hammel, p. 124–125, 157.

[43] Hara, p. 118–119; and Hough, p. 293. An unknown, but "large" number of the 5th Yokosuka troops were killed in the sinking of their transport ship.

[44] Zimmerman, p. 74.

[45] Hough, p. 297.

[46] Frank, p. 194–213; and Lundstrom, p. 45. In comparison to the 560 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) separating Lunga Point from Rabaul, Berlin was about 460 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) from Allied air bases in eastern England. Later United States Admiral of the Fleet, William F. Halsey paid tribute to Australian Coastwatchers,

"The Coastwatchers saved Guadalcanal, and Guadalcanal saved the South Pacific." Also see: Behind Enemy Lines: An Amateur Radio Operator's Amazing Tale of Bravery (<http://www.arrl.org/news/features/2009/06/04/10861/?nc=1>)

[47] Morison, p. 15; and Hough, p. 298.

[48] Smith, p. 103; and Hough, p. 298.

[49] Zimmerman, p. 78–79.

[50] Frank, *Guadalcanal*, p. 197.

[51] Smith, p. 79, 91–92 & 94–95.

[52] Griffith, p. 113; and Frank, pp. 198–199, 205, and 266. The term "rat transportation" was used because, like a rat, the Japanese ships were active at night. The 35th Infantry Brigade, from the 18th Division, contained 3,880 troops and was centered on the 124th Infantry Regiment with various attached supporting units (Alexander, p. 139).

[53] Morison, p. 113–114.

[54] Frank, p. 201–203; Griffith, p. 116–124; and Smith, p. 87–112.

[55] Frank, p. 218–219.

[56] Frank, p. 219–220; and Smith, p. 113–115 & 243. Most of the men in Ichiki's second echelon were from Asahikawa, Hokkaidō. "Kuma" refers to the brown bears that lived in that area.

[57] Frank, p. 220; and Smith, p. 121.

[58] Zimmerman, p. 80; and Griffith, p. 125.

[59] Hough, p. 298–299; Frank, p. 221–222; Smith, p. 129; and Griffith, p. 129–130.

[60] Griffith, p. 130–132; Frank, p. 221–222; and Smith, p. 130.

[61] Frank, p. 223 & 225–226; Griffith, p. 132 & 134–135; and Smith, p. 130–131, 138.

[62] Smith, p. 161–167. The Marine defenders that finally defeated Kokusho's charge were most likely from the 11th Marines with assistance from the 1st Pioneer Battalion (Smith, p. 167; and Frank, p. 235).

[63] Smith, p. 162–193; Frank, p. 237–246; and Griffith, p. 141–147.

[64] Griffith, p. 144; and Smith, p. 184–194.

[65] Smith, p. 197–198.

[66] Evans, p. 179–180; Frank, p. 247–252; Griffith, p. 156; and Smith, p. 198–200.

[67] Frank, p. 263.

[68] Frank, p. 264–265.

[69] Frank, p. 272.

[70] Griffith, p. 152; Frank, p. 224, 251–254, & 266; Jersey, p. 248–249; and Smith, p. 132 & 158.

[71] Smith, p. 204; and Frank, p. 270.

[72] Smith, p. 204–215, Frank, p. 269–274, Zimmerman, p. 96–101.

[73] Griffith, p. 169–176; Frank, p. 282–290; and Hough, p. 318–322.

[74] Frank, p. 290–291. 15 of the Marines and the three U.S. Navy sailors were killed when the Higgins boat carrying them from Tulagi to Aola Bay on Guadalcanal was lost. One of the Japanese killed in the raid was "Ishimoto", a Japanese intelligence agent who had worked in the

- Solomon Islands area prior to the war and had participated in the murder of two Catholic priests and two nuns at Tasimboko on September 3, 1942.
- [75] Rottman, p. 61; Griffith, p. 152; Frank, p. 224, 251–254, 266–268, & 289–290; Dull, p. 225–226; and Smith, p. 132 & 158.
- [76] Frank, p. 293–297; Morison, p. 147–149; and Dull, p. 225. Since not all of the Task Force 64 warships were available, Scott's force was designated as Task Group 64.2. The U.S. destroyers were from Squadron 12, commanded by Captain Robert G. Tobin in *Farenholt*.
- [77] Frank, p. 295–296; Hackett, *HIJMS Aoba: Tabular Record of Movement*; Morison, p. 149–151; D'Albas, p. 183; and Dull, p. 226.
- [78] Hornfischer, p. 157–188
- [79] Frank, p. 299–324; Morison, p. 154–171; and Dull, p. 226–230.
- [80] Frank, p. 313–315. The 16th was from the 2nd Division and the 230th from the 38th Division.
- [81] Evans, p. 181–182; Frank, p. 315–320; Morison, p. 171–175. Raizo Tanaka commanded Destroyer Squadron 2 which was part of the battleship's screen.
- [82] Frank, p. 319–321.
- [83] Frank, p. 321–326; Hough, p. 327–328.
- [84] Shaw, p. 34; and Rottman, p. 63.
- [85] Rottman, p. 61; Frank, p. 289–340; Hough, p. 322–330; Griffith, p. 186–187; Dull, p. 226–230; Morison, p. 149–171. The Japanese troops delivered to Guadalcanal during this time comprised the entire 2nd (Sendai) Infantry Division, two battalions from the 38th Infantry Division, and various artillery, tank, engineer, and other support units. Kawaguchi's forces also included what remained of the 3rd Battalion, 124th Infantry Regiment, which was originally part of the 35th Infantry Brigade commanded by Kawaguchi during the Battle of Edson's Ridge.
- [86] Miller, p. 155; Frank, p. 339–341; Hough, p. 330; Rottman, p. 62; Griffith, p. 187–188. Hyakutake sent a member of his staff, Colonel Masanobu Tsuji to monitor the 2nd Division's progress along the trail and to report to him on whether the attack could begin on October 22 as scheduled. Masanobu Tsuji has been identified by some historians as the most likely culprit behind the Bataan death march.
- [87] Griffith, p. 193; Frank, p. 346–348; Rottman, p. 62.
- [88] Hough, p. 332–333; Frank, p. 349–350; Rottman, p. 62–63; Griffith, p. 195–196; Miller, p. 157–158. The Marines lost 2 killed in the action. Japanese infantry losses are not recorded but were, according to Frank, "unquestionably severe." Griffith says that 600 Japanese soldiers were killed. Only 17 of the 44 members of the 1st Independent Tank Company survived the battle.
- [89] Frank, p. 361–362.
- [90] Hough, p. 336; Frank, p. 353–362; Griffith, p. 197–204; Miller, p. 147–151, 160–162; Lundstrom, p. 343–352. The 164th became the first Army unit to engage in combat in the war and was later awarded the Presidential Unit Citation.
- [91] Frank, 363–406, 418, 424, and 553; Zimmerman, p. 122–123; Griffith, p. 204; Hough, p. 337; Rottman, p. 63. Silver Star medals were awarded to Sgt. Norman Greber of Ohio, Pvt. Don Reno of Texas, Pvt. Jack Bando of Oregon, Pvt. Stan Ralph of New York, and Cpl. Michael Randall of New York for their actions during the battle.
- [92] Morison, p. 199–207; Frank, p. 368–378; Dull, p. 235–237.
- [93] Dull, p. 237–244; Frank, p. 379–403; Morison, p. 207–224.
- [94] Hough, p. 343; Hammel, p. 135; Griffith, p. 214–15; Frank, p. 411; Anderson; Shaw, p. 40–41; Zimmerman, p. 130–31.
- [95] Shaw, p. 40–41; Griffith, p. 215–218; Hough, p. 344–345; Zimmerman, p. 131–133; Frank, p. 412–420; Hammel, p. 138–139.
- [96] Zimmerman, p. 133–138; Griffith, p. 217–219; Hough, p. 347–348; Frank, p. 414–418; Miller, p. 195–197; Hammel, p. 141; Shaw, p. 41–42; Jersey, p. 297. Jersey states that the troops landed were from the 2nd Company, 230th Infantry commanded by 1st Lt Tamotsu Shinno plus the 6th Battery, 28th Mountain Artillery Regiment with the two guns.
- [97] Zimmerman, p. 133–141; Griffith, p. 217–223; Hough, p. 347–350; Frank, p. 414–423; Miller, p. 195–200; Hammel, p. 141–144; Shaw, p. 41–42; Jersey, p. 297–305.
- [98] Peatross, p. 132–133; Frank, p. 420–421; Hoffman. The two 2nd Raider companies sent to Aola were Companies C and E. The Aola construction units moved to Koli Point where they successfully built an auxiliary airfield beginning on December 3, 1942. (Miller, p. 174.)
- [99] Hough, p. 348–350; Shaw, p. 42–43; Frank, p. 420–424; Griffith, p. 246; Miller, p. 197–200; Zimmerman, p. 136–145; Jersey, p. 361.
- [100] Frank, p. 420–421, 424–25, 493–497; Anderson; Hough, p. 350–58; Zimmerman, p. 150–52.
- [101] Hammel, p. 41–46.
- [102] Hammel, p. 93.
- [103] Hammel, p. 37.
- [104] Hammel, p. 38–39; Frank, p. 429–430. The American reinforcements totaled 5,500 men and included the 1st Marine Aviation Engineer Battalion, replacements for ground and air units, the 4th Marine Replacement Battalion, two battalions of the U.S. Army's 182nd Infantry Regiment, and ammunition and supplies.
- [105] Frank, p. 432; Hammel, p. 50–90.
- [106] Hara, p. 137.
- [107] Hammel, p. 92.
- [108] Hammel, p. 99–107.
- [109] New moon Nov 8, 1942 15:19 hours: National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Phases of the Moon: 1901 to 2000 (<http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/phase/phases1901.html>)
- [110] Frank, p. 428–461; Hammel, p. 103–401; Hara, p. 137–156.
- [111] Frank, p. 465–474; Hammel, p. 298–345. The American air sorties were possible due to a supply of 488 55-gallon drums of 100-octane gas that was hidden in a secluded area under the jungle canopy by Cub-1 sailor, August Martello.

- [112] Hammel, p. 349–395; Frank, p. 469–486.
- [113] Frank, p. 484–488, 527; Hammel, p. 391–395.
- [114] Dull, p. 261, Frank, p. 497–499. On December 24, the 8th Fleet, 11th Air Fleet, and all other Japanese naval units in the New Guinea and Solomon Islands areas were combined under one command, designated the Southeast Area Fleet with Jinichi Kusaka in command.
- [115] Evans, p. 197–198, Crenshaw, p. 136, Frank, p. 499–502.
- [116] Hara, p. 160–161, Roscoe, p. 206, Dull, p. 262, Evans, p. 197–198, Crenshaw, p. 137, Toland, p. 419, Frank, p. 502, Morison, p. 295.
- [117] Dull, p. 262–263, Evans, p. 198–199, Crenshaw, p. 137, Morison, p. 297, Frank, p. 502–504.
- [118] Brown, p. 124–125, USSBS, p. 139, Roscoe, p. 206, Dull, p. 262, Crenshaw, p. 26–33, Kilpatrick, p. 139–142, Morison, p. 294–296, Frank, p. 504.
- [119] Hara, p. 161–164, Dull, p. 265, Evans, p. 199–202, Crenshaw, p. 34, 63, 139–151, Morison, p. 297–305, Frank, p. 507–510.
- [120] Dull, p. 265, Crenshaw, p. 56–66, Morison, p. 303–312, Frank, p. 510–515.
- [121] Frank, *Guadalcanal*, p. 527.
- [122] Dull, p. 266–267; Evans, p. 203–205; Morison, p. 318–319; Frank, p. 518–521.
- [123] Jersey, p. 384, Frank, p. 536–538, Griffith, p. 268, Hayashi, p. 62–64, Toland, p. 426.
- [124] Hayashi, p. 62–64, Griffith, p. 268, Frank, p. 534–539, Toland, p. 424–426, Dull, p. 261, Morison, p. 318–321. During the conference with Sugiyama and Nagano, the Emperor asked Nagano, "Why was it that it took the Americans just a few days to build an air base and the Japanese more than a month or so?" (The IJN originally occupied Guadalcanal and began constructing the airfield). Nagano apologized and replied that the Americans had used machines while the Japanese had to rely on manpower (Toland, p. 426.).
- [125] Frank, p. 247–252, 293, 417–420, 430–431, 521–522, 529 Griffith, p. 156, 257–259, 270, Miller, p. 143, 173–177, 183, 189, 213–219, Jersey, p. 304–305, 345–346, 363, 365, Hough, p. 360–362, Shaw, p. 46–47, Zimmerman, p. 156–157, 164. The Americal Division infantry regiments were national guard units. The 164th was from North Dakota, the 182nd from Massachusetts, and the 132nd from Illinois. The 147th had previously been part of the 37th Infantry Division. During its time on Guadalcanal, the 1st Marine Division suffered 650 killed, 31 missing, 1,278 injured, and 8,580 who contracted some type of disease, mainly malaria. The 2nd Marine Regiment had arrived at Guadalcanal with most of the 1st Marine Division, but remained behind to rejoin its parent unit, the 2nd Marine Division. The U.S. Army's 25th Infantry Division's 35th Regiment arrived at Guadalcanal on December 17, the 27th Regiment on January 1, and the 161st Regiment on January 4. The 2nd Marine Division's headquarter's units, the 6th Marine Regiment, and various Marine weapons and support units also arrived on January 4 and January 6. U.S. Major General John Marston, commander of the 2nd Marine Division, remained in New Zealand because he was superior in time in rank to Patch. Instead, Brigadier General Alphonse De Carre commanded the 2nd Marine Division on Guadalcanal. The total number of Marines on Guadalcanal and Tulagi on January 6, 1943 was 18,383.
- [126] Frank, p. 529–534, Miller, p. 231–237, 244, 249–252, Jersey, p. 350–351, Anderson, Hough, p. 363–364, Griffith, p. 263–265.
- [127] Frank, p. 563–567, Miller, p. 290–305, Jersey, p. 367–371.
- [128] Miller, p. 338, Frank, p. 540–560, Morison, p. 333–339, Rottman, p. 64, Griffith, p. 269–279, Jersey, p. 384–388, Hayashi, p. 64.
- [129] Hough, p. 367–368, Frank, p. 568–576, Miller, p. 319–342, Morison, p. 342–350. After unloading their cargo, the U.S. transports evacuated the 2nd Marine Regiment from the island. The 2nd Marines had been on Guadalcanal since the beginning of the campaign.
- [130] Frank, p. 582–588, 757–758, Jersey, p. 376–378, Morison, p. 364–368, Miller, p. 343–345, Zimmerman, p. 162, Dull, p. 268.
- [131] Frank, p. 589–597, Jersey, p. 378–383, 383, 400–401, Miller p. 342–348.
- [132] U.S. Navy, *Building the Navy's Bases in World War II*, p. 246–256.
- [133] Hough, p. 374, Zimmerman, p. 166.
- [134] Murray, p. 215, Hough, p. 372.
- [135] Hough, p. 372, Miller, p. 350, Zimmerman, p. 166.
- [136] Willmott, *Barrier and the Javelin*, pp.522–523; Parshall and Tully, *Shattered Sword*, pp.416–430.
- [137] Hornfischer, *Neptune's Inferno*, p. 11–15
- [138] Willmott, H. P; Robin Cross, Charles Messenger (2006) [2004]. "American Offensives in the Pacific". In Dennis Cowe. *World War II*. London: Dorling Kindersley. pp. g. 208. ISBN 1-4053-1262-9.; Miller, p. 350, Shaw, p. 52, Alexander, p. 81.
- [139] Murray, p. 215.
- [140] Quoted in Leckie (1999) p. 9 and others
- [141] Zimmerman, p. 167.

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# Tet Offensive

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The **Tet Offensive** was a military campaign during the Vietnam War that was launched on January 30, 1968 by forces of the People's Army of Vietnam against the forces of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), the United States, and their allies. The purpose of the offensive was to utilize the element of surprise and strike military and civilian command and control centers throughout South Vietnam, during a period when no attacks were supposed to take place.<sup>[1]</sup>

The operations are referred to as the Tet Offensive because there was a prior agreement to "cease fire" during the Tet festivities (Lunar New Year Celebrations). The Viet Cong broke the agreement, and launched an attack campaign that began during the early morning hours of 30 January 1968, on *Tết Nguyên Đán*. The main wave of attacks was carried out the next morning. Both North and South Vietnam announced on national radio broadcasts that there would be a two-day cease-fire during the holiday. In Vietnamese, the offensive is called *Cuộc Tổng tiến công và nổi dậy* ("General Offensive and Uprising"), or *Tết Mậu Thân* (Tet, year of the monkey).

The NLF launched a wave of attacks on the morning of 30 January in the I and II Corps Tactical Zones of South Vietnam. This early attack did not, however, cause undue alarm or lead to widespread defensive measures. When the main NLF operation began the next morning, the offensive was countrywide in scope and well coordinated, with more than 80,000 communist troops striking more than 100 towns and cities, including 36 of 44 provincial capitals, five of the six autonomous cities, 72 of 245 district towns, and the southern capital.<sup>[2]</sup> The offensive was the largest military operation yet conducted by either side up to that point in the war.

The initial attacks stunned the US and South Vietnamese armies and took them by surprise, but most were quickly contained and beaten back, inflicting massive casualties on communist forces. During the Battle of Hue intense fighting lasted for a month and the NLF executed thousands of residents in the Massacre at Huế. Around the US combat base at Khe Sanh fighting continued for two more months. Although the offensive was a military defeat for the communists, it had a profound effect on the US government and shocked the US public, which had been led to believe by its political and military leaders that the communists were, due to previous defeats, incapable of launching such a massive effort.

The term "Tet offensive" usually refers to the January–February 1968 NLF offensive, but it can also include the so-called "mini-Tet" offensives that took place in May and August.

## Background

### Order of battle and communist capabilities

During the fall of 1967, two questions weighed heavily on the minds of the American public and the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson: Was the U.S. strategy of attrition working in South Vietnam and who was winning the war? According to General William C. Westmoreland, the commander of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), the answer could be found by the solution to a simple equation. Take the total number of communist troops estimated in-country and subtract those killed or captured during military operations to determine the "crossover point" at which the number of those eliminated exceeded those recruited or replaced. There was a discrepancy, however, between MACV and the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) order of battle estimates concerning the strength of communist guerrilla forces within South Vietnam.<sup>[3]</sup> In September, members of the MACV intelligence services and the CIA met to prepare a Special National Intelligence Estimate that would be utilized by the administration as a gauge of U.S. success in the conflict.

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General William C. Westmoreland,  
COMUSMACV

Provided with an enemy intelligence windfall accrued during Operations Cedar Falls and Junction City, the CIA members of the group believed that the number of communist guerrillas, irregulars, and cadre within the South could be as high as 430,000. The MACV Combined Intelligence Center, on the other hand, maintained that the number could be no more than 300,000.<sup>[4]</sup> Westmoreland was deeply concerned about the possible perceptions of the American public to such an increased estimate, since communist troop strength was routinely provided to reporters during press briefings.<sup>[5]</sup> According to MACV's chief of intelligence, General Joseph McChristian, the new figures "would create a political bombshell," since they were positive proof that the communists "had the capability and the will to continue a protracted war of attrition."<sup>[4]</sup>

In May, MACV attempted to obtain a compromise from the CIA by maintaining that Viet Cong militias did not constitute a fighting force but were essentially low level fifth columnists used for information

collection.<sup>[6]</sup> The agency responded that such a notion was ridiculous, since the militias were directly responsible for half of the casualties inflicted on U.S. forces. With the groups deadlocked, George Carver, CIA deputy director for Vietnamese affairs, was asked to mediate the dispute. In September, Carver devised a compromise: The CIA would drop its insistence on including the irregulars in the final tally of forces and add a prose addendum to the estimate that would explain the agency's position.<sup>[7]</sup> George Allen, Carver's deputy, laid responsibility for the agency's capitulation at the feet of Richard Helms, the director of the CIA. He believed that "it was a political problem...[Helms] didn't want the agency...contravening the policy interest of the administration."<sup>[8]</sup>

## Success of the Offensive

During the second half of 1967 the administration had become alarmed by criticism, both inside and outside the government, and by reports of declining public support for its Vietnam policies.<sup>[9]</sup> According to public opinion polls, the percentage of Americans who believed that the U.S. had made a mistake by sending troops to Vietnam had risen from 25 percent in 1965 to 45 percent by December 1967.<sup>[10]</sup> This trend was fueled not by a belief that the struggle was not worthwhile, but by mounting casualty figures, rising taxes, and the feeling that there was no end to the war in sight.<sup>[11]</sup> A poll taken in November indicated that 55 percent wanted a tougher war policy, exemplified by the public belief that "it was an error for us to have gotten involved in Vietnam in the first place. But now that we're there, let's win - or get out."<sup>[12]</sup> This prompted the administration to launch a so-called "Success Offensive", a concerted effort to alter the widespread public perception that the war had reached a stalemate and to convince the American people that the administration's policies were succeeding. Under the leadership of National Security Advisor Walt W. Rostow, the news media then was inundated by a wave of effusive optimism. Every statistical indicator of progress, from "kill ratios" and "body counts" to village pacification was fed to the press and to the Congress. "We are beginning to win this struggle" asserted Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey on NBC's "Today Show" in mid-November. "We are on the offensive. Territory is being gained. We are making steady progress."<sup>[13]</sup> At the end of November, the campaign reached its climax when Johnson summoned Westmoreland and the new U.S. Ambassador, Ellsworth Bunker, to Washington, D.C., for what was billed as a "high level policy review". Upon their arrival, the two men bolstered the administration's claims of success. From Saigon, pacification chief Robert Komer asserted that the "pacification" program in the countryside was succeeding, and that sixty-eight percent of the South Vietnamese population was under the control of Saigon while only seventeen percent was under the control of the Vietcong.<sup>[14]</sup> General Bruce Palmer, Jr., one of Westmoreland's three Field Force commanders, claimed that "the Viet Cong has been defeated" and that "He can't get food and he can't recruit. He has been forced to change his



strategy from trying to control the people on the coast to trying to survive in the mountains."<sup>[15]</sup>

Westmoreland was even more emphatic in his assertions. At an address at the National Press Club on 21 November he reported that, as of the end of 1967, the communists were "unable to mount a major offensive...I am absolutely certain that whereas in 1965 the enemy was winning, today he is certainly losing...We have reached an important point when the end begins to come into view."<sup>[13]</sup> By the end of the year the administration's approval rating had indeed crept up by eight percent, but an early January Gallup poll indicated that forty-seven percent of the American public still disapproved of the President's handling of the war.<sup>[16]</sup> The American public, "more confused than convinced, more doubtful than despairing...adopted a 'wait and see' attitude."<sup>[17]</sup> During a discussion with an interviewer from *Time* magazine, Westmoreland defied the communists to launch an attack: "I hope they try something, because we are looking for a fight."<sup>[18]</sup>

## Northern decisions

### Party politics

Planning in Hanoi for a winter-spring offensive during 1968 had begun in early 1967 and continued until early the following year. According to American sources, there has been an extreme reluctance among Vietnamese historians to discuss the decision-making process that led to the *General Offensive General Uprising*, even decades after the event.<sup>[19]</sup> In official Vietnamese literature, the decision to launch *Tet Mau Than* was usually presented as the result of a perceived U.S. failure to win the war quickly, the failure of the American bombing campaign against the North Vietnam, and the anti-war sentiment that pervaded the population of the U.S.<sup>[20]</sup> The decision to launch the general offensive, however, was much more complicated.

The decision signaled the end of a bitter, decade-long debate within the Party leadership between first two, and then three factions. The moderates believed that the economic viability of North Vietnam should come before support of a massive and conventional southern war and who generally followed the Soviet line of peaceful coexistence by reunifying Vietnam through political means. Heading this faction were party theoretician Trường Chinh and Minister of Defense Võ Nguyên Giáp. The militant faction, on the other hand, tended to follow the foreign policy line of the People's Republic of China and called for the reunification of the nation by military means and that no negotiations should be undertaken with the Americans. This group was led by Party First Secretary Lê Duẩn and Lê Đức Thọ (no relation). From the early-to-mid-1960s, the militants had dictated the direction of the war in South Vietnam.<sup>[21]</sup>

General Nguyễn Chí Thanh the head of Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), communist headquarters for the South, was another prominent militant. Strangely, the followers of the Chinese line centered their strategy against the US and its allies on large-scale, main force actions rather than the protracted guerrilla war espoused by Mao Zedong.<sup>[22]</sup>

By 1966-1967, however, after suffering massive casualties, stalemate on the battlefield, and destruction of the northern economy by U.S. aerial bombing, there was a dawning realization that, if current trends continued, Hanoi would eventually lack the resources necessary to affect the military situation in the South.<sup>[23]</sup> As a result, there were more strident calls by the moderates for negotiations and a revision of strategy. They felt that a return to guerrilla tactics was more appropriate since the U.S. could not be defeated conventionally. They also complained that the policy of rejecting negotiations was in error.<sup>[24]</sup> The Americans could only be worn down in a war of wills during a period of "fighting while talking." During 1967 things had become so bad on the battlefield that Lê Duẩn ordered Thanh to incorporate aspects of protracted guerrilla warfare into his strategy.<sup>[25]</sup>

During the same period, a counterattack was launched by a new, third grouping (the centrists) led by President Hồ Chí Minh, Lê Đức Thọ, and Foreign Minister Nguyễn Duy Trinh, who called for negotiations.<sup>[26]</sup> From October 1966 through April 1967, a very public debate over military strategy took place in print and via radio between Thanh and his rival for military power, Giáp.<sup>[27]</sup> Giáp had advocated a defensive, primarily guerrilla strategy against the U.S. and South Vietnam.<sup>[28]</sup> Thanh's position was that Giáp and his adherents were centered on their experiences

during the First Indochina War and that they were too "conservative and captive to old methods and past experience... mechanically repeating the past."<sup>[29]</sup>

The arguments over domestic and military strategy also carried a foreign policy element as well, because North Vietnam was totally dependent on outside military and economic aid. The vast majority of its military equipment was provided by either the Soviet Union or China. Beijing advocated that North Vietnam conduct a protracted war on the Maoist model, fearing that a conventional conflict might draw them in as it had in the Korean War. They also resisted the idea of negotiating with the allies. Moscow, on the other hand, advocated negotiations, but simultaneously armed Hanoi's forces to conduct a conventional war on the Soviet model. North Vietnamese foreign policy, therefore consisted of maintaining a critical balance between war policy, internal and external policies, domestic adversaries, and foreign allies with "self-serving agendas."<sup>[30]</sup>

To "break the will of their domestic opponents and reaffirm their autonomy vis-à-vis their foreign allies" hundreds of pro-Soviet, party moderates, military officers, and intelligentsia were arrested on 27 July 1967, during what came to be called the Revisionist Anti-Party Affair.<sup>[31]</sup> All of the arrests were based on the individual's stance on the Politburo's choice of tactics and strategy for the proposed General Offensive.<sup>[32]</sup> This move cemented the position of the militants as Hanoi's strategy: The rejection of negotiations, the abandonment of protracted warfare, and the focus on the offensive in the towns and cities of South Vietnam. More arrests followed in November and December.

### **General Offensive and Uprising**

The operational plan for the General Offensive and Uprising had its origin as the "COSVN proposal" at Thanh's southern headquarters in April 1967 and had then been relayed to Hanoi the following month. The general was then ordered to the capital to explain his concept in person to the Military Central Commission. At a meeting in July, Thanh briefed the plan to the Politburo.<sup>[33]</sup> On the evening of 6 July, after receiving permission to begin preparations for the offensive, Thanh attended a party and died of a heart attack after drinking too much.<sup>[34]</sup>

After cementing their position during the Party crackdown, the militants sped up planning for a major conventional offensive to break the military deadlock. They concluded that the Saigon government and the U.S. presence were so unpopular with the population of the South that a broad-based attack would spark a spontaneous uprising of the population, which, if the offensive was successful, would enable the communists to sweep to a quick, decisive victory. Their basis for this conclusion included: a belief that the South Vietnamese military was no longer combat effective; the results of the fall 1967 South Vietnamese presidential election (in which the Nguyễn Văn Thiệu/Nguyễn Cao Kỳ ticket had only received 24 percent of the popular vote); the Buddhist crises of 1963 and 1966; well-publicized anti-war demonstrations in Saigon; and continuous criticism of the Thieu government in the southern press.<sup>[35]</sup> Launching such an offensive would also finally put an end to what have been described as "dovish calls for talks, criticism of military strategy, Chinese diatribes of Soviet perfidy, and Soviet pressure to negotiate—all of which needed to be silenced."<sup>[31]</sup>

In October, the Politburo decided on the Tet holiday as the launch date and met again in December to reaffirm its decision and formalize it at the 14th Plenary session of the Party Central Committee in January 1968.<sup>[36]</sup> The resultant *Resolution 14* was a major blow to domestic opposition and "foreign obstruction." Concessions had been made to the center group, however, by agreeing that negotiations were possible, but the document essentially centered on the creation of "a spontaneous uprising in order to win a decisive victory in the shortest time possible."<sup>[37]</sup>

Contrary to Western belief, General Giáp did not plan or command the offensive himself. Thanh's original plan was elaborated on by a party committee headed by Thanh's deputy, Phạm Hùng, and then modified by Giáp.<sup>[38]</sup> The Defense Minister may have been convinced to toe the line by the arrest and imprisonment of most of the members of his staff during the Revisionist Anti-Party Affair. Although Giáp went to work "reluctantly, under duress," he may have found the task easier due to the fact that he was faced with a *fait accompli*.<sup>[39]</sup> Since the Politburo had already approved the offensive, all he had to do was make it work. He combined guerrilla operations into what was basically a conventional military offensive and shifted the burden of sparking the popular uprising to the Viet Cong. If it worked, all would be well and good. If it failed, it would be a failure only for the Party militants. For the moderates and centrists, it offered the prospect of negotiations and a possible end to the American bombing of the North. Only in the eyes of the militants, therefore, did the offensive become a "go for broke" effort. Others in the Politburo were willing to settle for a much less ambitious "victory."<sup>[40]</sup>

The operation would involve a preliminary phase, during which diversionary attacks would be launched in the border areas of South Vietnam to draw American attention and forces away from the cities. The *General Offensive, General Uprising* would then commence with simultaneous actions on major allied bases and most urban areas, and with particular emphasis on the cities of Saigon and Hue. Concurrently, a substantial threat would have to be made against the U.S. combat base at Khe Sanh. The Khe Sanh actions would draw North Vietnamese forces away from the offensive into the cities, but Giáp considered them necessary in order to protect his supply lines and divert American attention.<sup>[41]</sup> Attacks on other U.S. forces were of secondary, or even tertiary importance, since Giáp considered his main objective to be weakening or destroying the South Vietnamese military and government through popular revolt.<sup>[42]</sup> The offensive, therefore was aimed at influencing the South Vietnamese public, not that of the U.S. There is conflicting evidence as to whether, or to what extent, the offensive was intended to influence either the March primaries or the November presidential election in the U.S.<sup>[43]</sup>



North Vietnamese Defense Minister Võ Nguyên  
Giáp



Viet Cong troops pose with new AK-47 assault rifles and American field radios

According to General Trần Văn Trà, the new military head of COSVN, the offensive was to have three distinct phases: Phase I, scheduled to begin on 30 January, would be a countrywide assault on the cities, conducted primarily by Vietcong forces. Concurrently, a propaganda offensive to induce ARVN troops to desert and the South Vietnamese population to rise up against the government would be launched. If outright victory was not achieved, the battle might still lead to the creation of a coalition government and the withdrawal of the Americans. If the general offensive failed to achieve these purposes, followup operations would be conducted to wear down the enemy and lead to a negotiated settlement; Phase II was scheduled to begin on 5 May, and Phase III on 17 August.<sup>[44]</sup>

Preparations for the offensive were already underway. The logistical build-up began in mid-year, and by January 1968, 81,000 tons of supplies and 200,000 troops, including seven complete infantry regiments and 20 independent battalions made the trip south on the Ho Chi Minh Trail.<sup>[45]</sup> This logistical effort also involved re-arming the Viet Cong with new AK-47 assault rifles and B-40 rocket-propelled grenade launchers, which granted them superior firepower over their less well-armed ARVN opponents. To pave the way and to confuse the allies as to its intentions, Hanoi launched a diplomatic offensive. Foreign Minister Trinh announced on 30 December that Hanoi *would* rather than *could* open negotiations if the U.S. unconditionally ended Operation Rolling Thunder, the bombing campaign against North Vietnam.<sup>[46]</sup> This announcement provoked a flurry of diplomatic activity (which amounted to nothing) during the last weeks of the year.

South Vietnamese and U.S. military intelligence estimated that communist forces in South Vietnam during January 1968 totaled 323,000 men, including 130,000 North Vietnamese regulars, 160,000 Viet Cong and members of the infrastructure, and 33,000 service and support troops. They were organized into nine divisions composed of 35 infantry and 20 artillery or anti-aircraft artillery regiments, which were, in turn, composed of 230 infantry and six sapper battalions.<sup>[47]</sup>

## Allied unpreparedness

### Suspicious and diversions

Signs of impending communist action did not go unnoticed among the allied intelligence collection apparatus in Saigon. During the late summer and fall of 1967 both South Vietnamese and U.S. intelligence agencies collected clues that indicated a significant shift in communist strategic planning. By mid-December, mounting evidence convinced many in Washington and Saigon that something big was underway. During the last three months of the year intelligence agencies had observed signs of a major communist military buildup. In addition to captured documents (a copy of *Resolution 13*, for example, was captured by early October), observations of enemy logistical operations were also quite clear: in October the number of trucks observed heading south through Laos on the Hồ Chí Minh Trail jumped from the previous monthly average of 480 to 1,116. By November this total reached 3,823 and, in December, 6,315.<sup>[48]</sup> On 20 December Westmoreland cabled Washington that he expected the communists "to undertake an intensified countrywide effort, perhaps a maximum effort, over a relatively short period of time."<sup>[49]</sup>

Despite all the warning signs, however, the allies were still surprised by the scale and scope of the offensive. According to ARVN Colonel Hoang Ngoc Lung the answer lay with the allied intelligence methodology itself, which tended to estimate the enemy's probable course of action based upon their capabilities, not their intentions. Since, in the allied estimation, the communists hardly had the capability to launch such an ambitious enterprise: "There was little possibility that the enemy could initiate a general offensive, regardless of his intentions."<sup>[50]</sup> The answer could also be partially explained by the lack of coordination and cooperation between competing intelligence branches, both South Vietnamese and American. The situation from the U.S. perspective was best summed up by an MACV intelligence analyst: "If we'd gotten the whole battle plan, it wouldn't have been believed. It wouldn't have been credible to us."<sup>[51]</sup>



Lieutenant General Frederick Weyand,  
commander of II Field Force, Vietnam

From spring through the fall of 1967, the U.S. command in Saigon was perplexed by a series of actions initiated by the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong in the border regions. On 24 April a U.S. Marine Corps patrol prematurely triggered a North Vietnamese offensive aimed at taking the airstrip and combat base at Khe Sanh, the western anchor of the Marine's defensive positions in Quang Tri Province. By the time the action there had ended in May, 940 North Vietnamese troops and 155 Marines had been killed.<sup>[52]</sup> For 49 days during early September and lasting into October, the North Vietnamese began shelling the U.S. Marine outpost of Con Thien, just south of the Demilitarized Zone or DMZ.<sup>[53]</sup> The intense shelling (100–150 rounds per day) prompted Westmoreland to launch Operation Neutralize, an intense aerial bombardment campaign of 4,000 sorties into and just north of the demarcation line.<sup>[54]</sup>

On 27 October, an ARVN battalion at Song Be, the capital of Phuoc Long Province, came under attack by an entire North Vietnamese regiment. Two days later, another North Vietnamese Regiment attacked a U.S. Special Forces border outpost at Loc Ninh, in Binh Long Province.<sup>[53]</sup> This attack sparked a ten-day battle that drew in elements of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division and the ARVN 18th Division and left 800 North Vietnamese troops dead at its conclusion.<sup>[55]</sup>

The most severe of what came to be known as "the Border Battles" erupted during October and November around Dak To, another border outpost in Kontum Province. The clashes there between the four regiments of the 1st North Vietnamese Division, the U.S. 4th Infantry Division, the U.S. 173rd Airborne Brigade, and ARVN infantry and Airborne elements, lasted for 22 days. By the time the fighting was over, between 1,200 and 1,600 North Vietnamese and 262 U.S. troops had lost their lives.<sup>[55][56]</sup> MACV intelligence was confused by the possible motives of the North Vietnamese in prompting such large-scale actions in remote regions where U.S. firepower and aerial might could be applied indiscriminately. Tactically and strategically, these operations made no sense. What the communists had done was carry out the first stage of their plan: to fix the attention of the U.S. command on the borders and draw the bulk of U.S. forces away from the heavily populated coastal lowlands and cities.<sup>[57]</sup>

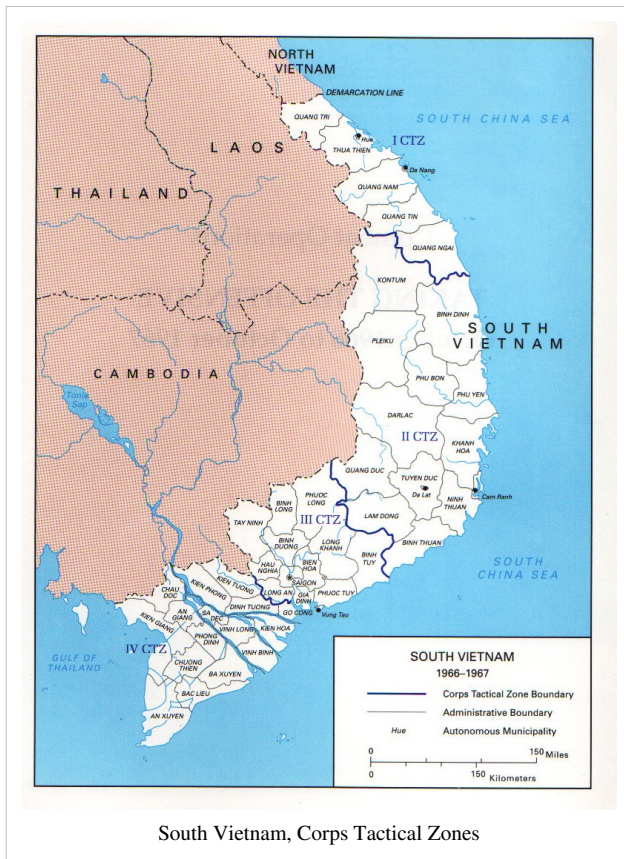
Westmoreland was more concerned with the situation at Khe Sanh, where, on 21 January, a force estimated at between 20,000–40,000 North Vietnamese troops had besieged the U.S. Marine garrison. MACV was convinced that the communists planned to stage an attack and overrun the base as a prelude to an all-out effort to seize the two northernmost provinces of South Vietnam.<sup>[58]</sup> To deter any such possibility, he deployed 250,000 men, including half of MACV's U.S. maneuver battalions, to the I Corps Tactical Zone.

This course of events disturbed Lieutenant General Frederick Weyand, commander of U.S. forces in III Corps, which included the Capital Military District. Weyand, a former intelligence officer, was suspicious of the pattern of communist activities in his area of responsibility and notified Westmoreland of his concerns on 10 January. Westmoreland agreed with his estimate and ordered 15 U.S. battalions to redeploy from positions near the Cambodian border back to the outskirts of Saigon.<sup>[2]</sup> When the offensive did begin, a total of 27 allied maneuver

battalions defended the city and the surrounding area. This redeployment may have been one of the most critical tactical decisions of the war.<sup>[59]</sup>

### Before the storm

By the beginning of January 1968, the U.S. had deployed 331,098 Army personnel and 78,013 Marines in nine divisions, an armoured cavalry regiment, and two separate brigades to South Vietnam. They were joined there by the 1st Australian Task Force, a Royal Thai Army regiment, two South Korean infantry divisions, and a Republic of Korea Marine Corps brigade.<sup>[60]</sup> South Vietnamese strength totaled 350,000 regulars in the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps.<sup>[61]</sup> They were in turn supported by the 151,000-man South Vietnamese Regional Forces and 149,000-man South Vietnamese Popular Forces, which were the equivalent of regional and local militias.<sup>[62]</sup>



In the days immediately preceding the offensive, the preparedness of allied forces was relatively relaxed. Hanoi had announced in October that it would observe a seven-day truce from 27 January to 3 February for the Tet holiday, and the South Vietnamese military made plans to allow recreational leave for approximately half of its forces. General Westmoreland, who had already cancelled the truce in I Corps, requested that its ally cancel the upcoming cease-fire, but President Thieu (who had already reduced the cease-fire to 36 hours), refused to do so, claiming that it would damage troop morale and only benefit communist propagandists.<sup>[63]</sup>

On 28 January 11 Viet Cong cadres were captured in the city of Qui Nhon while in possession of two pre-recorded audio tapes whose message appealed to the populace in "already occupied Saigon, Hue, and Da Nang."<sup>[64]</sup> The following afternoon, General Cao Van Vien, chief of the Vietnamese Joint General Staff,<sup>[65]</sup> ordered his four corps commanders to place their troops on alert. Yet, there was still a lack of a sense of urgency on the part of the allies. If Westmoreland had a grasp of the potential for danger, he did not communicate it very

well to others.<sup>[66]</sup> On the evening of 30 January, 200 U.S. officers—all of whom served on the MACV intelligence staff—attended a pool party at their quarters in Saigon. According to James Meecham, an analyst at the Combined Intelligence Center who attended the party: "I had no conception Tet was coming, absolutely zero... Of the 200-odd officers present, not one I talked to knew Tet was coming, without exception."<sup>[67]</sup>

The general also failed to communicate his concerns adequately to Washington. Although he had warned the President between 25 and 30 January that "widespread" communist attacks were in the offing, his admonitions had tended to be so oblique or so hedged with official optimism that even the administration was unprepared.<sup>[68]</sup> No one - in either Washington or Vietnam - was expecting what happened.



## Offensive

"Crack the Sky, Shake the Earth"

— Message to communist forces who were informed that they were "about to inaugurate the greatest battle in the history of our country".<sup>[46]</sup>

Whether by accident or design, the first wave of attacks began shortly after midnight on 30 January as all five provincial capitals in II Corps and Da Nang, in I Corps, were attacked.<sup>[69]</sup> Nha Trang, headquarters of the U.S. I Field Force, was the first to be hit, followed shortly by Ban Me Thuot, Kontum, Hoi An, Tuy Hoa, Da Nang, Qui Nhon, and Pleiku. During all of these operations, the communists followed a similar pattern: mortar or rocket attacks were closely followed by massed ground assaults conducted by battalion-strength elements of the Viet Cong, sometimes supported by North Vietnamese regulars. These forces would join with local cadres who served as guides to lead the regulars to the most senior South Vietnamese headquarters and the radio station. The operations, however, were not well coordinated at the local level. By daylight, almost all communist forces had been driven from their objectives. General Phillip B. Davidson, the new MACV chief of intelligence, notified Westmoreland that "This is going to happen in the rest of the country tonight and tomorrow morning."<sup>[70]</sup> All U.S. forces were placed on maximum alert and similar orders were issued to all ARVN units. The allies, however, still responded without any real sense of urgency. Orders cancelling leaves either came too late or were disregarded.<sup>[71]</sup>

At 03:00 on the morning of 31 January communist forces assailed Saigon, Cholon, and Gia Dinh in the Capital Military District; Quảng Trị (again), Huế, Quang Tin, Tam Kỳ, and Quảng Ngãi as well as U.S. bases at Phú Bài and Chu Lai in I Corps; Phan Thiết, Tuy Hòa, and U.S. installations at Bong Son and An Khê in II Corps; and Cần Thơ and Vinh Long in IV Corps. The following day, Biên Hòa, Long Thanh, Bình Dương in III Corps and Kien Hoa, Dinh Tuong, Go Cong, Kien Giang, Vinh Binh, Bến Tre, and Kien Tuong in IV Corps were assaulted. The last attack of the initial operation was launched against Bac Lieu in IV Corps on 10 February. A total of approximately



U.S. Marines battle in Hamo village

84,000 communist troops participated in the attacks while thousands of others stood by to act as reinforcements or as blocking forces.<sup>[72]</sup> Communist forces also mortared or rocketed every major allied airfield and attacked 64 district capitals and scores of smaller towns.

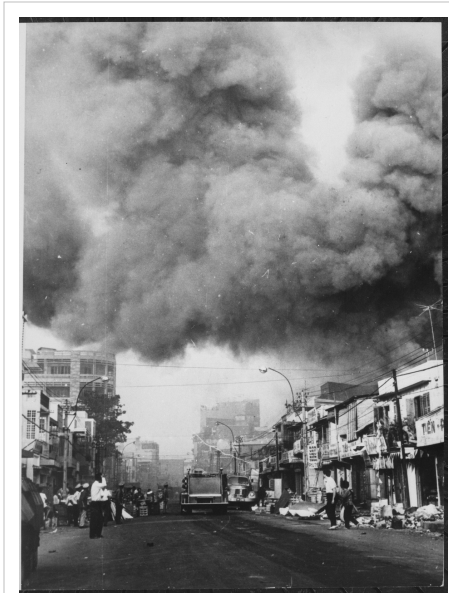
In most cases the defense against the communists was a South Vietnamese affair. Local militia or ARVN forces, supported by the National Police, usually drove the attackers out within two or three days, sometimes within hours; but heavy fighting continued several days longer in Kontum, Buôn Ma Thuột, Phan Thiết, Cần Thơ, and Bến Tre.<sup>[73]</sup> The outcome in each instance was usually dictated by the ability of local commanders—some were outstanding, others were cowardly or incompetent. During this crucial crisis, however, no South Vietnamese unit broke or defected to the communists.<sup>[74]</sup>

According to Westmoreland, he responded to the news of the attacks with optimism, both in media presentations and in his reports to Washington. According to closer observers, however, the general was "stunned that the communists had been able to coordinate so many attacks in such secrecy" and he was "dispirited and deeply shaken."<sup>[75]</sup> According to Clark Clifford, at the time of the initial attacks, the reaction of the U.S. military leadership "approached panic".<sup>[76]</sup> Although Westmoreland's appraisal of the military situation was correct, he made himself look foolish by continuously maintaining his belief that Khe Sanh was the real objective of the communists and that 155 attacks by 84,000 troops was a diversion (a position he maintained until at least 12 February).<sup>[77]</sup> *Washington Post* reporter

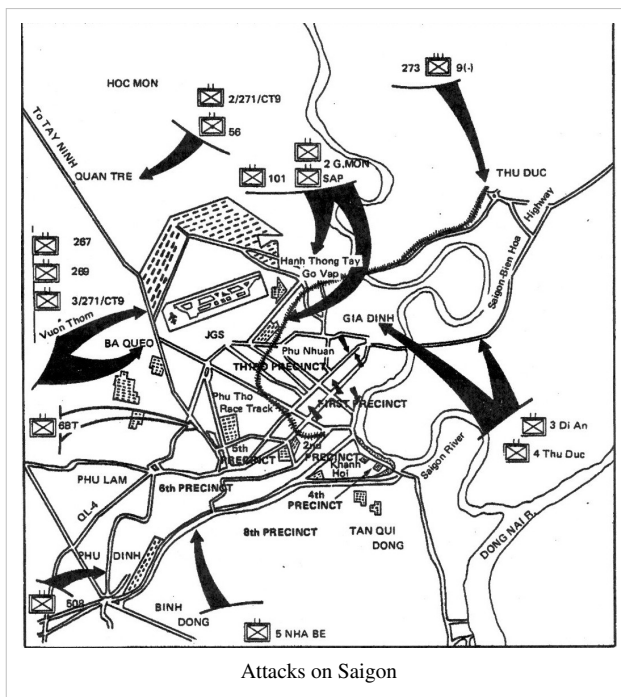
Peter Braestrup summed up the feelings of his colleagues by asking "How could any effort against Saigon, especially downtown Saigon, be a diversion?"<sup>[78]</sup>

## Saigon

Although Saigon was the focal point of the offensive, the communists did not seek a total takeover of the city.<sup>[79]</sup> Rather, they had six primary targets to strike in the downtown area: the headquarters of the ARVN General Staff at Tan Son Nhut Air Base; the Independence Palace, the US Embassy, Saigon, the Long Binh Naval Headquarters, and the National Radio Station.<sup>[80]</sup> These objectives were all assaulted by small elements of the local C-10 Sapper Battalion.<sup>[80]</sup> Elsewhere in the city or its outskirts, ten Viet Cong Local Force Battalions attacked the central police station and the Artillery Command and the Armored Command headquarters (both at Go Vap). The plan called for all these initial forces to capture and hold their positions for 48 hours, by which time reinforcements were to have arrived to relieve them.



Black smoke covers areas of Sài Gòn during Tet Offensive



Attacks on Saigon

The defense of the Capital Military Zone was primarily a South Vietnamese responsibility and it was initially defended by eight ARVN infantry battalions and the local police force. By 3 February they had been reinforced by five ARVN Ranger Battalions, five Marine Corps, and five ARVN Airborne Battalions. U.S. Army units participating in the defense included the 716th Military Police Battalion, seven infantry battalions (one mechanized), and six artillery battalions.<sup>[81]</sup>

At the Armored Command and Artillery Command headquarters on the northern edge of the city the communists planned to utilize captured tanks and artillery pieces but the tanks had been moved to another base two months earlier and that the breech blocks of the artillery pieces had been removed, rendering them useless.<sup>[82]</sup>

One of the most important Viet Cong targets was the National Radio Station. Its troops had brought along a tape recording of Hồ Chí Minh announcing the liberation of Saigon and calling for a "General Uprising" against the Thiệu government. They seized the building held it for six hours but they were unable to broadcast due to the cutting off of the audio lines from the main studio to the tower as soon as the station was seized.<sup>[83]</sup>

The US Embassy, Saigon, a massive six-floor building situated within a four acre compound, had only been completed in September. At 02:45 it was attacked by a 19-man sapper team that blew a hole in the 8-foot-high (**unknown operator: u'strong'** m) surrounding wall and charged through. With their officers killed in the initial attack and their attempt to gain access to the building having failed, the sappers simply occupied the chancery grounds until they were all killed or captured by US reinforcements that were landed on the roof of the building six hours later. By 09:20 the embassy and grounds were secured, with the loss of five US personnel.<sup>[84]</sup>

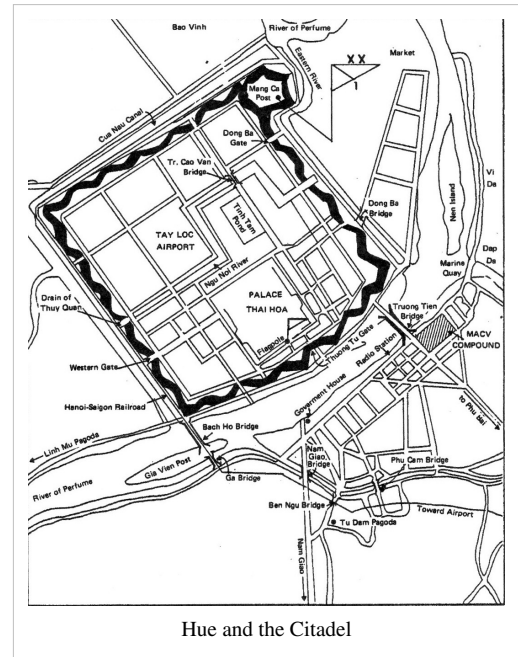
Throughout the city, small squads of Viet Cong fanned out to attack various officers and enlisted men's billets, homes of ARVN officers, and district police stations. Provided with "blacklists" of military officers and civil servants, they began to round up and execute any that could be found.<sup>[85]</sup> On 1 February General Nguyễn Ngọc Loan, chief of the National Police, publicly executed Viet Cong officer Nguyen Van Lem captured in civilian clothing in front of a photographer and film cameraman.<sup>[85][86]</sup>

Outside the city proper, two Viet Cong battalions attacked the U.S. logistical and headquarters complex at Long Binh. Biên Hòa Air Base was struck by a battalion, while the adjacent ARVN III Corps headquarters was the objective of another. Tan Son Nhut Air Base, in the northwestern part of the city, was attacked by three battalions.<sup>[87]</sup> A combat-ready battalion of ARVN paratroopers, awaiting transport to Da Nang, went instead directly into action and halted the attack.<sup>[88]</sup> A total of 35 communist battalions, many of whose troops were undercover cadres who had lived and worked within the capital or its environs for years, had been committed to the Saigon objectives.<sup>[80]</sup> By dawn, most of the attacks within the city center had been eliminated, but severe fighting between Viet Cong and allied forces erupted in the Chinese neighborhood of Cholon around the Phu Tho racetrack, southwest of the city center, which was being utilized as a staging area and command and control center by the North Vietnamese.<sup>[89]</sup> Bitter and destructive house-to-house fighting erupted in the area. On 4 February, the residents were ordered to leave their homes and the area was declared a free fire zone. Fighting in the city came to a close only after a fierce battle between the ARVN Rangers and PAVN forces on 7 March.<sup>[89]</sup>

Except at Huế and mopping-up operations in and around Saigon, the first surge of the offensive was over by the second week of February. The U.S. estimated that during the first phase (30 January – 8 April), approximately 45,000 PAVN soldiers were killed and an unknown number were wounded. For years this figure has been held as excessively optimistic, as it represented more than half the forces involved in this battle. Stanley Karnow claims he confirmed this figure in Hanoi in 1981.<sup>[90]</sup> Westmoreland himself claimed a smaller number of enemies disabled, estimating that during the same period 32,000 PAVN troops were killed and another 5,800 captured.<sup>[74]</sup> The South Vietnamese suffered 2,788 killed, 8,299 wounded, and 587 missing in action. U.S. and other allied forces suffered 1,536 killed, 7,764 wounded, and 11 missing.<sup>[91]</sup>

## Huế

At 03:40 on the foggy morning of 31 January, allied defensive positions north of the Perfume River in the city of Hue were mortared and rocketed and then attacked by two battalions of the 6th PAVN Regiment. Their target was the ARVN 1st Division headquarters located in the Citadel,<sup>[92]</sup> a three-square mile complex of palaces, parks, and residences,<sup>[93]</sup> which were surrounded by a moat and a massive earth and masonry fortress built at the beginning of the 19th century by Emperor Gia Long.<sup>[94]</sup> The undermanned ARVN defenders, led by General Ngo Quang Truong, managed to hold their position, but the majority of the Citadel fell to the PAVN. On the south bank of the river, the 4th PAVN Regiment attempted to seize the local MACV headquarters,<sup>[95]</sup> but was held at bay by a makeshift force of approximately 200 Americans.<sup>[94]</sup> The rest of the city was overrun by PAVN forces which initially totaled approximately 7,500 men.<sup>[96]</sup> Both sides then rushed to reinforce and resupply their forces.<sup>[97]</sup> Lasting 25 days,<sup>[98]</sup> the battle of Huế became one of the longest and bloodiest single battles of the Vietnam War.



Hue and the Citadel

During the first days of the North Vietnamese occupation, U.S. intelligence vastly underestimated the number of PAVN troops and little appreciated the effort that was going to be necessary to evict them. General Westmoreland informed the Joint Chiefs that "the enemy has approximately three companies in the Hue Citadel and the marines have sent a battalion into the area to clear them out."<sup>[99]</sup> Since there were no U.S. formations stationed in Hue, relief forces had to move up from Phu Bai,<sup>[100]</sup> eight kilometers to the southeast. In a misty drizzle, U.S. Marines of the 1st Marine Division and soldiers of the 1st ARVN Division and Marine Corps cleared the city street by street and house by house,<sup>[101]</sup> a deadly and destructive form of urban combat that the U.S. military had not engaged in since the Battle of Seoul during the Korean War, and for which neither side were trained.<sup>[102]</sup> Because of the historical and cultural significance of the city, American forces did not immediately apply air and artillery strikes as widely as they had in other cities.<sup>[103]</sup>



U.S. Marines advance past an M48 Patton tank during the battle for Hue

Outside Hue, elements of the U.S. 1st Air Cavalry Division and the 101st Airborne Division fought to seal PAVN access and cut off their lines of supply and reinforcement.<sup>[104]</sup> By this point in the battle 16 to 18 PAVN battalions (8,000-11,000 men) were taking part in the fighting for the city itself or the approaches to the former imperial capital.<sup>[105]</sup> Two of the North Vietnamese regiments had made a forced march from the vicinity of Khe Sanh to Hue in order to participate. During most of February, the allies gradually fought their way towards the Citadel, which was only

taken after four days of intense struggle. The city was not declared recaptured by U.S. and ARVN forces until 24

February,<sup>[106]</sup> when members of the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Regiment, 1st ARVN Division raised the South Vietnamese flag over the Palace of Perfect Peace.<sup>[107]</sup>

During the intense action, the allies estimated that North Vietnamese forces had between 2,500 and 5,000 killed and 89 captured in the city and in the surrounding area.<sup>[108]</sup> 216 U.S. Marines and soldiers had been killed during the fighting and 1,609 were wounded. 421 ARVN troops were killed, another 2,123 were wounded, and 31 were missing.<sup>[105]</sup> More than 5,800 civilians had lost their lives during the battle and 116,000 were left homeless out of an original population of 140,000.<sup>[109][110]</sup>

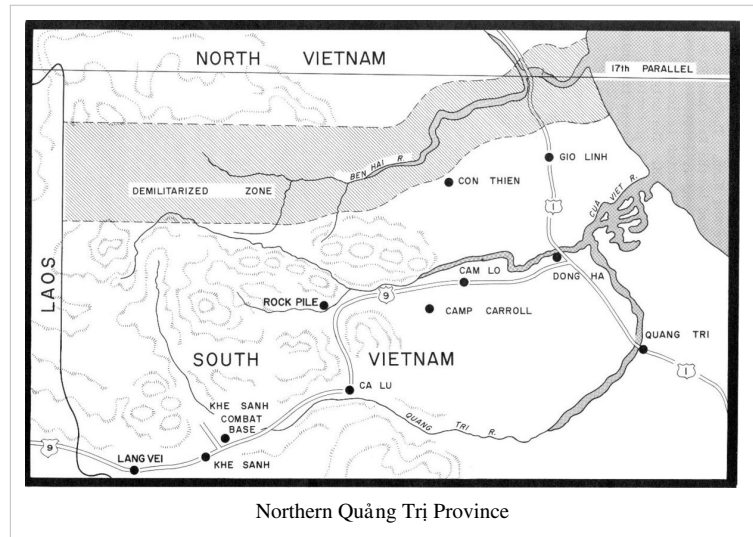
In the aftermath of the recapture of the city, the discovery of several mass graves (the last of which were uncovered in 1970) of South Vietnamese citizens of Hue sparked a controversy that has not diminished with time.<sup>[111]</sup> The victims had either been clubbed or shot to death or simply buried alive.<sup>[112]</sup> The official allied explanation was that during their initial occupation of the city, the PAVN had quickly begun to systematically round up (under the guise of re-education) and then execute as many as 2,800 South Vietnamese civilians that they believed to be potentially hostile to communist control.<sup>[113]</sup> Those taken into custody included South Vietnamese military personnel, present and former government officials, local civil servants, teachers, policemen, and religious figures.<sup>[111][112]</sup> Historian Gunther Lewy claimed that a captured Viet Cong document stated that the communists had "eliminated 1,892 administrative personnel, 38 policemen, 790 tyrants."<sup>[114]</sup>

This thesis achieved wide credence at the time, but the Massacre at Huế came under increasing press scrutiny later, when press reports exposed that South Vietnamese "revenge squads" had also been at work in the aftermath of the battle, searching out and executing citizens that had supported the communist occupation.<sup>[115][116]</sup> The North Vietnamese later further muddled the waters by stating that their forces had indeed rounded up "reactionary" captives for transport to the North, but that local commanders, under battlefield exigencies, had executed them for expediency's sake.<sup>[117]</sup> General Truong, commander of the 1st ARVN Division, believed that the captives had been executed by the communists in order to protect the identities of members of the local Viet Cong infrastructure, whose covers had been blown.<sup>[118]</sup> The exact circumstances leading to the deaths of those citizens of Hue discovered in the mass graves may never be known, but it was probably the result of a combination of all of the above.<sup>[111]</sup>

## Khe Sanh

The attack on Khe Sanh, which began on 21 January, may have been intended to serve two purposes—as a real attempt to seize the position or as a diversion to draw American attention and forces away from the population centers in the lowlands, a deception that was "both plausible and easy to orchestrate."<sup>[119]</sup> In General Westmoreland's view, the purpose of the Combat Base was to provoke the North Vietnamese into a focused and prolonged confrontation in a confined geographic area, one which would allow the application of massive U.S. artillery and air strikes that would inflict heavy casualties in a relatively unpopulated region.<sup>[120]</sup> By the end of 1967, MACV had moved nearly half of its maneuver battalions to I Corps in anticipation of just such a battle.

Westmoreland—and the American media, which covered the action extensively—often made inevitable comparisons between the actions at Khe Sanh and the Battle of Điện Biên Phủ, where a French base had been besieged and ultimately overrun by Viet Minh forces under the command of General Giáp during the First Indochina War.<sup>[121]</sup> Westmoreland, who knew of Nguyen Chi Thanh's penchant for large-scale operations—but not of his death—believed that this was going to be an attempt to replicate that victory. He intended to stage his own "Dien Bien Phu in reverse."<sup>[122]</sup>



Khe Sanh and its 6,000 U.S. Marine Corps, Army, and ARVN defenders was surrounded by two to three North Vietnamese divisions, totaling approximately 20,000 men. Throughout the siege, which lasted until 8 April, the allies were subjected to heavy mortar, rocket, and artillery bombardment, combined with sporadic small-scale infantry attacks on outlying positions. With the exception of the overrunning of the U.S. Special Forces camp at Lang Vei, however, there was never a major ground assault on the base and the battle became largely a duel between American and North Vietnamese artillerists, combined with massive air strikes conducted by U.S. aircraft. By the end of the siege, U.S. Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy aircraft had dropped 39,179 tons of ordnance in the defense of the base.<sup>[123]</sup>

The overland supply route to the base had been cut off, and airborne resupply by cargo aircraft became extremely dangerous due to heavy North Vietnamese antiaircraft fire. Thanks to innovative high-speed "Super Gaggles," which utilized fighter-bombers in combination with large numbers of supply helicopters, and the Air Force's utilization of C-130 Hercules cargo aircraft employing the innovative LAPES delivery method, aerial resupply was never halted.

When the Tet Offensive began, feelings ran high at MACV that the base was in for a serious attack. In I Corps, the Tet truce had been cancelled in apprehension of a communist assault that never happened. The offensive passed Khe Sanh by and the intermittent battle continued. Westmoreland's fixation upon the base continued even as the battle raged around him in Saigon.<sup>[58]</sup> On 1 February, as the offensive reached its height, he wrote a memo for his staff—which was never delivered—claiming that "The enemy is attempting to confuse the issue...I suspect he is also trying to draw everyone's attention from the area of greatest threat, the northern part of I Corps. Let me caution everyone not to be confused."<sup>[124]</sup>

In the end, a major allied relief expedition (Operation Pegasus) reached Khe Sanh on 8 April, but North Vietnamese forces were already withdrawing from the area.<sup>[125]</sup> Both sides claimed that the battle had served its intended purpose. The U.S. estimated that 8,000 North Vietnamese troops had been killed and considerably more wounded, against 730 American lives lost and another 2,642 wounded.<sup>[126]</sup>



## Phases II and III



U.S. Marines move through the ruins of the hamlet of Dai Do after several days of intense fighting

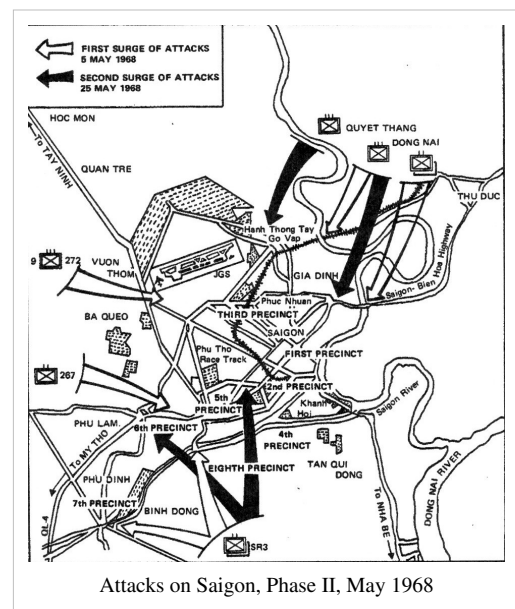
To further enhance their political posture at the Paris talks, which opened on 13 May, the North Vietnamese opened the second phase of the **General Offensive** in late April. U.S. intelligence sources estimated between February and May the North Vietnamese dispatched 50,000 men down the Ho Chi Minh Trail to replace losses incurred during the earlier fighting.<sup>[127]</sup> Some of the most prolonged and vicious combat of the war opened on 29 April and lasted until 30 May when the 8,000 men of the 320th PAVN Division, backed by artillery from across the DMZ, threatened the U.S. logistical base at Dong Ha, in northwestern Quảng Trị Province. In what became known as the Battle of Dai Do, the North Vietnamese clashed savagely with U.S. Marine,

Army, and ARVN forces before withdrawing. The North Vietnamese lost an estimated 2,100 men after inflicting casualties on the allies of 290 killed and 946 wounded.<sup>[128]</sup>

During the early morning hours of 4 May, communist units initiated the second phase of the offensive (known by the South Vietnamese and Americans as "Mini-Tet") by striking 119 targets throughout South Vietnam, including Saigon. This time, however, allied intelligence was better prepared, stripping away the element of surprise. Most of the communist forces were intercepted by allied screening elements before they reached their targets. 13 Viet Cong battalions, however, managed to slip through the cordon and once again plunged the capital into chaos. Severe fighting occurred at Phu Lam, (where it took two days to root out the 267th Viet Cong Local Force Battalion), around the Y-Bridge, and at Tan Son Nhut.<sup>[129]</sup> By 12 May, however, it was all over. Vietcong forces withdrew from the area leaving behind over 3,000 dead.<sup>[130]</sup>

The fighting had no sooner died down around Saigon than U.S. forces in Quang Tin Province suffered what was, without doubt, the most serious American defeat of the war. On 10 May two regiments of the 2nd PAVN Division attacked Kham Duc, the last Special Forces border surveillance camp in I Corps. 1,800 U.S. and South Vietnamese troops were isolated and under intense attack when MACV made the decision to avoid a situation reminiscent of that at Khe Sanh. Kham Duc was evacuated by air while under fire, and abandoned to the North Vietnamese.<sup>[131]</sup>

The communists returned to Saigon on 25 May and launched a second wave of attacks on the city. The fighting during this phase differed from *Tet Mau Than* and "Mini-Tet" in that no U.S. installations were attacked. During this series of actions, Viet Cong forces occupied six Buddhist pagodas in the mistaken belief that they would be immune from artillery and air attack. The fiercest fighting once again took place in Cholon. One notable event occurred on 18 June when 152 members of the Viet Cong's *Quyet Thang* Regiment surrendered to ARVN forces, the largest communist surrender of the war.<sup>[132]</sup> The actions also brought more death and suffering to the city's inhabitants. A further 87,000 were made homeless while more than 500 were killed and another 4,500 were wounded.<sup>[133]</sup> During the second phase (5 May – 30 May) U.S. casualties amounted to 1,161 killed and 3,954 wounded,<sup>[134]</sup> while 143 South Vietnamese servicemen were killed and another 643 were wounded.<sup>[132]</sup>



Attacks on Saigon, Phase II, May 1968



Kham Duc during the evacuation

Phase III of the offensive began on 17 August and involved attacks in I, II, and III Corps. Significantly, during this series of actions only North Vietnamese forces participated. The main offensive was preceded by attacks on the border towns of Tay Ninh, An Loc, and Loc Ninh, which were initiated in order to draw defensive forces from the cities.<sup>[135]</sup> A thrust against Da Nang was preempted by the U.S. Marines on 16 August. Continuing their border-clearing operations, three North Vietnamese regiments asserted heavy pressure on the U.S. Special Forces camp at Bu Prang, in Quang Duc Province, five kilometers from the

Cambodian border. The fighting lasted for two days before the North Vietnamese broke it off; the combat resulted in the deaths of 776 North Vietnamese, 114 South Vietnamese, and two Americans.<sup>[136]</sup>

Saigon was struck again during this phase, but the attacks were less sustained and once again easily repulsed. As far as MACV was concerned, the August offensive "was a dismal failure."<sup>[137]</sup> In five weeks of fighting and after the loss of 20,000 troops, not a single objective had been attained during this "final and decisive phase." Yet, as historian Ronald Spector has pointed out "the communist failures were not final or decisive either."<sup>[137]</sup> During the same period 700 U.S. troops were killed in action.<sup>[138]</sup>

The horrendous casualties and suffering endured by communist units during these sustained operations was beginning to tell. The fact that there were no apparent military gains made that could possibly justify all the blood and effort just exacerbated the situation. During the first half of 1969, more than 20,000 communist troops rallied to allied forces, a threefold increase over the 1968 figure.<sup>[139]</sup> On 5 April 1969, COSVN issued *Directive 55* to all of its subordinate units: "Never again and under no circumstances are we going to risk our entire military force for just such an offensive. On the contrary, we should endeavor to preserve our military potential for future campaigns."<sup>[140]</sup>

## Aftermath

### North Vietnam

The leadership in Hanoi must have been initially despondent about the outcome of their great gamble.<sup>[141][142]</sup> Their first and most ambitious goal, producing a general uprising, had ended in a dismal failure. In total, approximately 85,000–100,000 communist troops had participated in the initial onslaught and in the follow-up phases. Overall, during the "Border Battles" of 1967 and the nine-month winter-spring campaign, 45,267 communist troops had been killed in action.<sup>[143]</sup>

The keys to the failure of Tet are not difficult to discern. Hanoi had underestimated the strategic mobility of the allied forces, which allowed them to redeploy at will to threatened areas; their battle plan was too complex and difficult to coordinate, which was amply demonstrated by the 30 January attacks; their violation of the principle of mass, attacking everywhere instead of concentrating their forces on a few specific targets, allowed their forces to be defeated piecemeal; the launching of massed attacks headlong into the teeth of vastly superior firepower; and last, but not least, the incorrect assumptions upon which the entire campaign was based.<sup>[144]</sup> According to General Tran Van Tra: "We did not correctly evaluate the specific balance of forces



South Vietnamese troops in action near Tan Son Nhut Air Base

between ourselves and the enemy, did not fully realize that the enemy still had considerable capabilities, and that our capabilities were limited, and set requirements that were beyond our actual strength.<sup>[145]</sup>

The communist effort to regain control of the countryside was somewhat more successful. According to the U.S. State Department the Vietcong "made pacification virtually inoperative. In the Mekong Delta the Vietcong was stronger now than ever and in other regions the countryside belongs to the VC."<sup>[146]</sup> General Wheeler reported that the offensive had brought counterinsurgency programs to a halt and "that to a large extent, the V.C. now controlled the countryside."<sup>[147]</sup> Unfortunately for the Vietcong, this state of affairs did not last. Heavy casualties and the backlash of the South Vietnamese and Americans resulted in more territorial losses and heavy casualties.<sup>[148]</sup>



A Viet Cong guerrilla awaits interrogation following his capture in the attacks on Saigon.

The horrendous losses inflicted on Viet Cong units struck into the heart of the irreplaceable infrastructure that had been built up for over a decade. MACV estimated that 181,149 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops had been killed during 1968.<sup>[149]</sup> From this point forward, Hanoi was forced to fill one-third of the Viet Cong's ranks with North Vietnamese regulars.<sup>[150]</sup> However, this change had little effect on the war, since North Vietnam had little difficulty making up the casualties inflicted by the offensive.<sup>[151]</sup> Some Western historians have come to believe that one insidious ulterior motive for the campaign was the elimination of competing southern members of the Party, thereby allowing the northerners more control once the war was won.<sup>[152]</sup>

It was not until after the conclusion of the first phase of the offensive that Hanoi realized that its sacrifices might not have been in vain. General Tran Do, North Vietnamese commander at the battle of Hue, gave some insight into how defeat was translated into victory:

"In all honesty, we didn't achieve our main objective, which was to spur uprisings throughout the South. Still, we inflicted heavy casualties on the Americans and their puppets, and this was a big gain for us. As for making an impact in the United States, it had not been our intention—but it turned out to be a fortunate result".<sup>[153]</sup>

Hanoi had in no way anticipated the political and psychological effect the offensive would have on the leadership and population of the U.S.<sup>[154]</sup> When the northern leadership saw how the U.S. was reacting to the offensive, they began to propagandize their "victory". The opening of negotiations and the diplomatic struggle, the option feared by the Party militants prior to the offensive, quickly came to occupy a position equal to that of the military struggle.<sup>[155]</sup>

On 5 May Trường Chinh rose to address a congress of Party members and proceeded to castigate the Party militants and their bid for quick victory. His "faction-bashing" tirade sparked a serious debate within the party leadership which lasted for four months. As the leader of the "main force war" and "quick victory" faction, Lê Duẩn also came under severe criticism. In August, Chinh's report on the situation was accepted *in toto*, published, and broadcast via Radio Hanoi. He had single-handedly shifted the nation's war strategy and restored himself to prominence as the Party's ideological conscience.<sup>[156]</sup> Meanwhile, the Vietcong proclaimed itself the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam, and took part in future peace negotiations under this title. It would be a long seven years until victory.

## South Vietnam

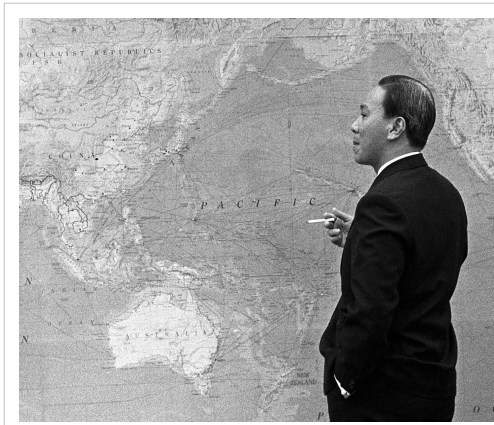
South Vietnam was a nation in turmoil both during and in the aftermath of the offensive. Tragedy had compounded tragedy as the conflict reached into the nation's cities for the first time. As government troops pulled back to defend the urban areas, the Vietcong moved in to fill the vacuum in the countryside. The violence and destruction witnessed during the offensive left a deep psychological scar on the South Vietnamese civilian population. Confidence in the government was shaken, since the offensive seemed to reveal that even with massive American support, the government could not protect its citizens.<sup>[157]</sup>

The human and material cost to South Vietnam was staggering. The number of civilian dead was estimated by the government at 14,300 with an additional 24,000 wounded.<sup>[158]</sup> 630,000 new refugees had been generated, joining the nearly 800,000 others already displaced by the war. By the end of 1968, one of every twelve South Vietnamese was living in a refugee camp.<sup>[158]</sup> More than 70,000 homes had been destroyed in the fighting and perhaps 30,000 more were heavily damaged and the nation's infrastructure had been virtually destroyed. The South Vietnamese military, although it had performed better than the Americans had expected, suffered from lowered morale, with desertion rates rising from 10.5 per thousand before Tet to 16.5 per thousand by July.<sup>[159]</sup> 1968 became the deadliest year of the war to date for the ARVN with 27,915 men killed.<sup>[149]</sup>



Civilians sort through the ruins of their homes in Cholon, the heavily damaged Chinese section of Saigon

In the wake of the offensive, however, fresh determination was exhibited by the Thieu government. On 1 February Thieu declared a state of martial law and, on 15 June, the National Assembly passed his request for a general mobilization of the population and the induction of 200,000 draftees into the armed forces by the end of the year (a decree that had failed to pass only five months previously due to strong political opposition).<sup>[160]</sup> This increase would bring South Vietnam's troop strength to more than 900,000 men.<sup>[161][162]</sup> Military mobilization, anti-corruption campaigns, demonstrations of political unity, and administrative reforms were quickly carried out.<sup>[163]</sup> Thiệu also established a National Recovery Committee to oversee food distribution, resettlement, and housing construction for the new refugees. Both the government and the Americans were encouraged by a new determination that was exhibited among the ordinary citizens of the Republic. Many urban dwellers were indignant that the communists had launched their attacks during Tet and it drove many who had been previously apathetic into active support of the government. Journalists, political figures, and religious leaders alike—even the militant Buddhists—professed confidence in the government's plans.<sup>[164]</sup>



Nguyễn Văn Thiệu was the president of South Vietnam

Thiệu saw an opportunity to consolidate his personal power and he took it. His only real political rival was Vice President Ky, the former Air Force commander, who had been outmaneuvered by Thiệu in the presidential election of 1967. In the aftermath of Tet, Ky supporters in the military and the administration were quickly removed from power, arrested, or exiled.<sup>[165]</sup> A crack-down on the South Vietnamese press also ensued and there was a worrisome return of former President Ngô Đình Diệm's Can Lao Party members to high positions in the government and military. By the summer of 1968, the President had earned a less exalted sobriquet among the South Vietnamese population, who had begun to call him "the little dictator."<sup>[166]</sup>

Thieu had also become very suspicious of his American allies, unwilling to believe (as did many South Vietnamese) that the U.S. had been caught by surprise by the offensive. "Now that it's all over," he queried a visiting Washington official, "you really knew it was coming didn't you?"<sup>[167][168]</sup> Lyndon Johnson's unilateral decision on 31 March to curtail the bombing of North Vietnam only confirmed what Thiệu already feared, that the Americans were going to abandon South Vietnam to the communists. For Thiệu, the bombing halt and the beginning of negotiations with the North brought not the hope of an end to the war, but "an abiding fear of peace."<sup>[167]</sup> He was only mollified after an 18 July meeting with Johnson in Honolulu, where the American president affirmed that Saigon would be a full partner in all negotiations and that the U.S. would not "support the imposition of a coalition government, or any other form of government, on the people of South Vietnam."<sup>[169]</sup>

## United States

The Tet Offensive created a crisis within the Johnson administration, which became increasingly unable to convince the American public that it had been a major defeat for the communists. The optimistic assessments made prior to the offensive by the administration and the Pentagon came under heavy criticism and ridicule as the "credibility gap" that had opened in 1967 widened into a chasm.<sup>[170]</sup>

The shocks that reverberated from the battlefield continued to widen: On 18 February 1968 MACV posted the highest U.S. casualty figures for a single week during the entire war: 543 killed and 2,547 wounded.<sup>[171]</sup> As a result of the heavy fighting, 1968 went on to become the deadliest year of the war for the US forces with 16,592 soldiers killed.<sup>[172]</sup> On 23 February the U.S. Selective Service System announced a new draft call for 48,000 men, the second highest of the war.<sup>[173]</sup> On 28 February Robert S. McNamara, the Secretary of Defense who had overseen the escalation of the war in 1964–1965, but who had eventually turned against it, stepped down from office.<sup>[174]</sup>

## Troop request

During the first two weeks of February, Generals Westmoreland and Wheeler communicated as to the necessity for reinforcements or troop increases in Vietnam. Westmoreland insisted that he only needed those forces either in-country or already scheduled for deployment and he was puzzled by the sense of unwarranted urgency in Wheeler's queries.<sup>[175]</sup> Westmoreland was tempted, however, when Wheeler emphasized that the White House might loosen restraints and allow operations in Laos, Cambodia, or possibly even North Vietnam itself.<sup>[176]</sup> On 8 February, Westmoreland responded that he could use another division "if operations in Laos are authorized".<sup>[177]</sup> Wheeler responded by challenging Westmoreland's assessment of the situation, pointing out dangers that his on-the-spot commander did not consider palpable, concluding: "In summary, if you need more troops, ask for them."<sup>[178]</sup>

Wheeler's bizarre promptings were influenced by the severe strain imposed upon the U.S. military by the Vietnam commitment, one which had been undertaken without the mobilization of its reserve forces. The Joint Chiefs had repeatedly requested national mobilization, not only to prepare for a possible intensification of the war, but also to

ensure that the nation's strategic reserve did not become depleted.<sup>[179]</sup> By obliquely ordering Westmoreland to demand more forces, Wheeler was attempting to solve two pressing problems.<sup>[75]</sup> In comparison with MACV's previous communications, which had been full of confidence, optimism, and resolve, Westmoreland's 12 February request for 10,500 troops was much more urgent: "which I desperately need... time is of the essence."<sup>[180]</sup> On 13 February, 10,500 previously authorized U.S. airborne troops and marines were dispatched to South Vietnam. The Joint Chiefs then played their hand, advising President Johnson to turn down MACV's requested division-sized reinforcement unless he called up some 1,234,001 marine and army reservists.<sup>[181]</sup>

Johnson dispatched Wheeler to Saigon on 20 February to determine military requirements in response to the offensive. Both Wheeler and Westmoreland were elated that in only eight days McNamara would be replaced by the hawkish Clark Clifford and that the military might finally obtain permission to widen the war.<sup>[182]</sup> Wheeler's written report of the trip, however, contained no mention of any new contingencies, strategies, or the building up the strategic reserve. It was couched in grave language that suggested that the 206,756-man request it proposed was a matter of vital military necessity.<sup>[183]</sup> Westmoreland wrote in his memoir that Wheeler had deliberately concealed the truth of the matter in order to force the issue of the strategic reserve upon the President.<sup>[184]</sup>

On 27 February, Johnson and McNamara discussed the proposed troop increase. To fulfill it would require an increase in overall military strength of about 400,000 men and the expenditure of an additional \$10 billion during fiscal 1969 and another \$15 billion in 1970.<sup>[185]</sup> These monetary concerns were pressing. Throughout the fall of 1967 and the spring of 1968, the U.S. was struggling with "one of the most severe monetary crises" of the period. Without a new tax bill and budgetary cuts, the nation would face even higher inflation "and the possible collapse of the monetary system".<sup>[186]</sup> Johnson's friend Clifford was concerned about what the American public would think of the escalation: "How do we avoid creating the feeling that we are pounding troops down a rathole?"<sup>[187]</sup>

According to the *Pentagon Papers*, "A fork in the road had been reached and the alternatives stood out in stark reality."<sup>[188]</sup> To meet Wheeler's request would mean a total U.S. military commitment to South Vietnam. "To deny it, or to attempt to cut it to a size which could be sustained by the thinly stretched active forces, would just as surely signify that an upper limit to the U.S. military commitment in South Vietnam had been reached."<sup>[188]</sup>

## Reassessment

To evaluate Westmoreland's request and its possible impact on domestic politics, Johnson convened the "Clifford Group" on 28 February and tasked its members with a complete policy reassessment.<sup>[189]</sup> Some of the members argued that the offensive represented an opportunity to defeat the North Vietnamese on American terms while others pointed out that neither side could win militarily, that North Vietnam could match any troop increase, that the bombing of the North be halted, and that a change in strategy was required that would seek not victory, but the staying power required to reach a negotiated settlement. This would require a less aggressive strategy that was designed to protect the population of South Vietnam.<sup>[190]</sup> The divided group's final report, issued on 4 March, "failed to seize the opportunity to change directions... and seemed to recommend that we continue rather haltingly down the same road."<sup>[191]</sup>

On 1 March Clifford had succeeded McNamara as Secretary of Defense. During the month, Clifford, who had entered office as a staunch supporter of the Vietnam commitment and who had opposed McNamara's de-escalatory views, turned against the war. According to Clifford: "The simple truth was that the military failed to sustain a respectable argument for their position."<sup>[192]</sup> Between the results of Tet and the meetings of the group that bore his name, he became convinced that deescalation was the only solution for the United States. He believed that the troop increase would lead only to a more violent stalemate and sought out others in the administration to assist him in convincing the President to reverse the escalation, to cap force levels at 550,000 men, to seek negotiations with Hanoi, and turn responsibility for the fighting over to the South Vietnamese.<sup>[193]</sup> Clifford quietly sought allies and was assisted in his effort by the so-called "8:30 Group" - Nitze, Warnke, Phil G. Goulding (Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs), George Elsey, and Air Force Colonel Robert E. Pursely.



On 27 February Secretary of State Dean Rusk had proposed that a partial bombing halt be implemented in North Vietnam and that an offer to negotiate be extended to Hanoi.<sup>[194]</sup> On 4 March Rusk reiterated the proposal, explaining that, during the rainy season in the North, bombing was less effective and that no military sacrifice would thus occur. This was purely a political ploy, however, since the North Vietnamese would probably again refuse to negotiate, casting the onus on them and "thus freeing our hand after a short period...putting the monkey firmly upon Hanoi's back for what was to follow."<sup>[195][196]</sup>

While this was being deliberated, the troop request was leaked to the press and published in *The New York Times* on 10 March.<sup>[197]</sup> The article also revealed that the request had begun a serious debate within the administration. According to it, many high-level officials believed that the U.S. troop increase would be matched by the communists and would simply maintain a stalemate at a higher level of violence. It went on to state that officials were saying in private that "widespread and deep changes in attitudes, a sense that a watershed has been reached."<sup>[198]</sup> A great deal has been said by historians concerning how the news media made Tet the "turning point" in the public's perception



ARVN Rangers moving through western Cholon, 10 May 1968

of the war. Popular CBS anchor Walter Cronkite stated during a news broadcast on February 27, "We have been too often disappointed by the optimism of the American leaders, both in Vietnam and Washington, to have faith any longer in the silver linings they find in the darkest clouds" and added that, "we are mired in a stalemate that could only be ended by negotiation, not victory."<sup>[199]</sup> Far from suffering a loss of morale, however, the majority of Americans had rallied to the side of the president. A Gallup poll in January 1968 revealed that 56 percent polled considered themselves hawks on the war and 27 percent doves, with 17 percent offering no opinion.<sup>[200]</sup> By early February, at the height of the first phase of the offensive, 61 percent declared themselves hawks, 23 percent doves, and 16 percent held no opinion. Johnson, however, made few comments to the press during or immediately after the offensive, leaving an impression of indecision on the public. It was this lack of communication that caused a rising disapproval rating for his conduct of the war. By the end of February, his approval rating had fallen from 63 percent to 47 percent. By the end of March the percentage of Americans that expressed confidence in U.S. military policies in Southeast Asia had fallen from 74 to 54 percent.<sup>[201]</sup>

By 22 March President Johnson had informed Wheeler to "forget the 100,000" men.<sup>[194]</sup> The President and his staff were refining a lesser version of the troop increase - a planned call-up of 62,000 reservists, 13,000 of whom would be sent to Vietnam.<sup>[202]</sup> Three days later, at Clifford's suggestion, Johnson called a conclave of the "Wise Men".<sup>[203]</sup> With few exceptions, all of the members of the group had formerly been accounted as hawks on the war. The group was joined by Rusk, Wheeler, Bundy, Rostow, and Clifford. The final assessment of the majority stupefied the group.<sup>[204]</sup> According to Clifford, "few of them were thinking solely of Vietnam anymore".<sup>[205]</sup> All but four members called for disengagement from the war, leaving the President "deeply shaken."<sup>[206]</sup> According to the *Pentagon Papers*, the advice of the group was decisive in convincing Johnson to reduce the bombing of North Vietnam.<sup>[207]</sup>

Lyndon Johnson was depressed and despondent at the course of recent events. The *New York Times* article had been released just two days before the United States Democratic Party's New Hampshire primary, where the President suffered an unexpected setback in the election, finishing barely ahead of Senator Eugene McCarthy. Soon afterward, Senator Robert F. Kennedy announced he would join the contest for the Democratic nomination, further emphasizing the plummeting support for Johnson's administration in the wake of Tet.

The President was to make a televised address to the nation on Vietnam policy on 31 March and was deliberating on both the troop request and his response to the military situation. By 28 March Clifford was working hard to convince him to tone down his hard-line speech, maintaining force levels at their present size, and instituting Rusk's bombing/negotiating proposal. To Clifford's surprise, both Rusk and Rostow (both of whom had previously been opposed to any form of deescalation) offered no opposition to Clifford's suggestions.<sup>[208]</sup> On 31 March President Johnson announced the unilateral (although still partial) bombing halt during his television address. He then stunned the nation by declining to run for a second term in office. To Washington's surprise, on 3 April Hanoi announced that it would conduct negotiations, which were scheduled to begin on 13 May in Paris.

On 9 June President Johnson replaced Westmoreland as commander of MACV with General Creighton W. Abrams. Although the decision had been made in December 1967 and Westmoreland was made Army Chief of Staff, many saw his relief as punishment for the entire Tet debacle.<sup>[209]</sup> Abrams' new strategy was quickly demonstrated by the closure of the "strategic" Khe Sanh base and the ending of multi-division "search and destroy" operations. Also gone were discussions of victory over North Vietnam. Abrams' new "One War" policy centered the American effort on the takeover of the fighting by the South Vietnamese (through Vietnamization), the pacification of the countryside, and the destruction of communist logistics.<sup>[210]</sup> The new administration of President Richard M. Nixon would oversee the withdrawal of U.S. forces and the continuation of negotiations.

## References

### Notes

- [1] Ang, p. 351. Two interpretations of communist goals have continued to dominate Western historical debate. The first maintained that the political consequences of the Winter-Spring Offensive were an intended rather than an unintended consequence. This view was supported by William Westmoreland in *A Soldier Reports*, Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1976, p. 322; Harry G. Summers in *On Strategy*, Novato CA: Presidio Press, 1982, p. 133; Leslie Gelb and Richard Betts, *The Irony of Vietnam*, Washington DC: The Brookings Institute, 1979, pp. 333–334; and Schmitz p. 90. This thesis appeared logical in hindsight, but it "fails to account for any realistic North Vietnamese military objectives, the logical prerequisite for an effort to influence American opinion." James J. Wirtz in *The Tet Offensive*, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1991, p. 18. The second thesis (which was also supported by the majority of contemporary captured Vietcong documents) was that the goal of the offensive was the immediate toppling of the Saigon government or, at the very least, the destruction of the government apparatus, the installation of a coalition government, or the occupation of large tracts of South Vietnamese territory. Historians supporting this view are Stanley Karnow in *Vietnam*, New York: Viking, 1983, p. 537; U.S. Grant Sharp in *Strategy for Defeat*, San Rafael CA: Presidio Press, 1978, p. 214; Patrick McGarvey in *Visions of Victory*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1969; and Wirtz, p. 60.
- [2] Dougan and Weiss, p. 8.
- [3] Dougan and Weiss, pp. 22–23
- [4] Dougan and Weiss, p. 22.
- [5] Hammond, p. 326.
- [6] Dougan and Weiss, p. 23.
- [7] Hammond, pp. 326, 327.
- [8] Dougan and Weiss, p. 23. This Order of Battle controversy resurfaced in 1982, when Westmoreland filed a lawsuit against CBS News after the airing of its program, *The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception*, which aired had on 23 January 1982.
- [9] Those in the administration and the military who urged a change in strategy included: Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara; Undersecretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach; Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs William Bundy; Ambassador to South Vietnam Henry Cabot Lodge; General Creighton W. Abrams, deputy commander of MACV; and Lieutenant General Frederick C. Weyand, commander of II Field Force, Vietnam. Lewis Sorley, *A Better War*. New York: Harvest Books, 1999, p. 6. Throughout the year, the *Pentagon Papers* claimed, Johnson had discounted any "negative analysis" of U.S. strategy by the CIA and the Pentagon offices of International Security Affairs and System Analysis, and had instead "seized upon optimistic reports from General Westmoreland." Neil Sheehan, et al. *The Pentagon Papers as Reported by the New York Times*. New York: Ballentine, 1971, p. 592.
- [10] Dougan and Weiss, p. 68.
- [11] Karnow, pp. 545–546.
- [12] Karnow, p. 546.
- [13] Dougan and Weiss, p. 66.
- [14] Schmitz, p. 56.
- [15] Schmitz, p. 58.
- [16] Dougan and Weiss, p. 69.

- [17] Dougan and Weiss, p. 67.
- [18] Karnow, p. 514.
- [19] Elliot, p. 1055.
- [20] Nguyen, p. 4.
- [21] Nguyen, pp. 15–16.
- [22] Nguyen, p. 20. See also Wirtz, pp. 30–50.
- [23] Wirtz, p. 20.
- [24] Doyle, Lipsman and Maitland, p. 55.
- [25] Nguyen, p. 22.
- [26] Contrary to Western belief, Hồ Chí Minh had been sidelined politically since 1963 and took little part in the day-to-day policy decisions of the Politburo or Secretariat. Nguyen, p. 30.
- [27] Wirtz, pp. 36–40, 47–49.
- [28] Hoang, pp. 15–16. See also Doyle, Lipsman and Maitland, p. 56.
- [29] Hoang, p. 16.
- [30] Nguyen, pp. 18–20.
- [31] Nguyen, p. 24.
- [32] Nguyen, p. 27.
- [33] *Victory in Vietnam*, p. 371.
- [34] *Victory in Vietnam*, p. 380. For years Western historians believed that Thanh had died as a result of wounds received during a U.S. air raid. Nguyen, fn. 147
- [35] Hoang, p. 24.
- [36] Ang, p. 352.
- [37] Doyle, Lipsman and Maitland, p. 56.
- [38] Nguyen, p. 34. Duiker, p. 288. Also see Doyle, Lipsman and Maitland, p. 56.
- [39] Marc J. Gilbert & James Wells *Hau Nghia Part 3*, 2005. <http://grunt.space.swri.edu/gilbert3.htm>. This reference, left over from an earlier editor, is a fine example of just how discerning research has to be. One of the few accurate statements in it is the one quoted above. The rest is inaccurate gibberish.
- [40] Doyle, Lipsman and Maitland, pp. 58–59.
- [41] Duiker, p. 299.
- [42] Hoang, p. 26.
- [43] Hoang offered opposing viewpoints (pp. 22–23) while William Duiker (p. 289) and Clark Clifford (p. 475) believed that it was so intended. Stanley Karnow did not (p. 537), while William Westmoreland never even mentioned the prospect in his memoir. A study of North Vietnamese documentation by James Wirtz led him to conclude that Giáp believed that the American people would have to endure two more years of military stalemate (post-offensive) before turning decisively against the war. Wirtz, p. 61.
- [44] Trần Văn Trà, *Tet*, p. 40.
- [45] *Victory in Vietnam*, p. 208. See also Doyle, Lipsman and Maitland, *The North*, p. 46.
- [46] Dougan and Weiss, p. 10.
- [47] Hoang, p. 10.
- [48] Hayward, *The Tet Offensive: Dialogues* (<http://www.ashbrook.org/publicat/dialogue/hayward-tet.html#2r>).
- [49] Dougan and Weiss, p. 11.
- [50] Hoang, p. 39.
- [51] Dougan and Weiss, p. 11. The Tet Offensive would later be utilized in a textbook at West Point as an example of "an allied intelligence failure to rank with Pearl Harbor in 1941 or the Ardennes Offensive in 1944." Lieutenant Colonel Dave R. Palmer: *Current Readings in Military History*. Clifford, p. 460.
- [52] Moyars Shore, *The Battle of Khe Sanh*. U.S. Marine Corps Historical Branch, 1969, p. 17.
- [53] Willbanks, p. 16.
- [54] Morocco, pp. 174–176.
- [55] Hoang, p. 9.
- [56] Willbanks, p. 17.
- [57] Maitland and McInerney, pp. 160–183.
- [58] Palmer, pp. 229–233.
- [59] Palmer, p. 235.
- [60] Stanton, p. 195.
- [61] Dougan and Weiss, p. 124.
- [62] Willbanks, p. 7.
- [63] Dougan and Weiss, p. 12.
- [64] Hoang, p. 35.
- [65] Sheehan, p. 778.

- [66] In their memoirs, both Johnson and Westmoreland stated that they had predicted the offensive. According to Clark Clifford, however, these later claims were rather "self serving". Clark Clifford, with Richard Holbrooke, *Counsel to the President*. New York: Random House, 1991, pp. 467–468.
- [67] Zaffiri, p. 280.
- [68] Hammond, p. 342.; Zaffiri, p. 280.  
For a treatment of official statements predicting the offensive, see Peter Braestrup. *Big Story*, New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1983, 1:60–77.
- [69] The first attacks may have been launched prematurely due to confusion over a changeover in the calendar date by communist units. Hanoi had arbitrarily forwarded the date of the holiday in order to allow its citizens respite from the retaliatory airstrikes that were sure to follow the offensive. Whether this was connected to the mixup over the launch date is unknown. All eight of the attacks were controlled by the North Vietnamese headquarters of Military Region 5.
- [70] Westmoreland, p. 323.
- [71] Stanton, p. 209.
- [72] Westmoreland, p. 328. Palmer gave a figure of 70,000, p. 238.
- [73] Westmoreland, p. 328.
- [74] Westmoreland, p. 332.
- [75] Karnow, p. 549.
- [76] Clifford, p. 474.
- [77] Zaffiri, p. 283. Clifford, p. 476.
- [78] Braestrup, p. 108.
- [79] Wiest, p. 41
- [80] Willbanks, p. 32.
- [81] Stanton, p. 215. For a detailed description of U.S. participation in the defense, see Keith W. Nolan, *The Battle of Saigon, Tet 1968*. New York: Pocket Books, 1996.
- [82] Westmoreland, p. 326.
- [83] Willbanks, pp. 32–33.
- [84] Willbanks, pp. 34–36.
- [85] Willbanks, p. 36.
- [86] *In the Jaws of History*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999.
- [87] Willbanks, pp. 37–39.
- [88] Hoang, p. 40.
- [89] Willbanks, p. 39.
- [90] Oberdorfer, p. 261, See also Palmer, p. 254 and Karnow, p. 534.
- [91] Department of Defense, *CACCF: Combat Area [Southeast Asia] Casualties Current File, as of Nov. 1993, Public Use Version*. Washington DC: National Archives, 1993.
- [92] Willbanks, p. 46.
- [93] Willbanks, pp. xxiv, 43.
- [94] Willbanks, p. 44.
- [95] Willbanks, p. 47.
- [96] Palmer, p. 245. These units included the 12th Viet Cong Main Force Battalion and the Hue City Sapper Battalion.
- [97] Willbanks, pp. 48–49.
- [98] Willbanks, p. 54.
- [99] Schulimson, et al., p. 175. For a detailed description of U.S. participation in the battle, see Keith W. Nolan, *Battle for Hue, Tet 1968*. Novato CA: Presidio Press, 1983.
- [100] Willbanks, p. 48.
- [101] Willbanks, pp. 50–51.
- [102] Dougan and Weiss, p. 28.
- [103] Willbanks, p. 49.
- [104] Willbanks, p. 53.
- [105] Schulimson, p. 213.
- [106] Willbanks, pp. 52–54.
- [107] Willbanks, p. 154.
- [108] Schulimson, p. 213. A PAVN document allegedly captured by the ARVN stated that 1,042 troops had been killed in the city proper and that several times that number had been wounded. Hoang, p. 84.
- [109] Schulimson, p. 216.
- [110] Willbanks, pp. 54–55.
- [111] Willbanks, pp. 99–103.
- [112] Willbanks, p. 55.
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- [113] Dougan and Weiss, p. 35. This was the version given in Douglas Pike's *The Viet Cong Strategy of Terror*, published by the U.S. Mission in 1970.
- [114] Lewy, p. 274.
- [115] Oberdorfer, pp. 232–233.
- [116] Willbanks, pp. 101–102.
- [117] Bui, p. 67.
- [118] Hoang, p. 82.
- [119] Karnow, p. 555, John Prados, *The Blood Road*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998, p. 242.
- [120] Westmoreland, pp. 339–340.
- [121] Westmoreland, p. 311.
- [122] Pisor, p. 61.
- [123] Prados and Stubbe, p. 297
- [124] Prados and Stubbe, p. 186.
- [125] Even at the end, Westmoreland was unable to give up his analogy: "his attempt to repeat Dien Bien Phu an abject failure." Westmoreland, p. 347.
- [126] Prados and Stubbe, p. 454.
- [127] Dougan and Weiss, p. 145.
- [128] Schulimson, p. 307. Perhaps more indicative of North Vietnamese losses were the 41 North Vietnamese prisoners taken and the recovery of 500 weapons, 132 of which were crew-served. Ibid. For a detailed description of the battle, see Keith William Nolan, *The Magnificent Bastards: The Joint Army-Marine Defense of Dong Ha, 1968*. New York: Dell, 1994.
- [129] A vivid description of the participation of four battalions of the U.S. 9th Infantry Division in the fighting in Cholon can be found in Keith Nolan's *House to House: Playing the Enemy's Game in Saigon, May 1968*. St. Paul MN: Zenith Press, 2006.
- [130] Hoang, p. 98.
- [131] The best descriptions are found in Ronald H. Spector, *After Tet*. New York: The Free Press, 1993, pp. 166–175 and Lieutenant Colonel Allen Gropman, *Air Power and the Airlift Evacuation of Kham Duc*. Washington DC: Office of Air Force History, 1985.
- [132] Hoang, p. 101.
- [133] Spector, p. 163.
- [134] Spector, p. 319.
- [135] Spector, p. 235.
- [136] Hoang, p. 110.
- [137] Spector, p. 240.
- [138] Dougan and Weiss, p. 152.
- [139] Hoang, p. 117.
- [140] Hoang, p. 118.
- [141] Karnow, pp. 544–545.
- [142] Doyle, Lipsman and Maitland, pp. 118, 120.
- [143] Tran Van Tra, *Tet*, pp. 49, 50.
- [144] Willbanks, p. 80.
- [145] Tran Van Tra, *Vietnam*, Washington DC: Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1983, p. 35. This public criticism of the Hanoi leadership led to Tra's removal from the Politburo and house arrest until his death in April 1994.
- [146] Schmitz, p. 106.
- [147] Schmitz, p. 109.
- [148] Duiker, p. 296. This was mainly due to General Creighton Abrams' new "One War" strategy and the CIA/South Vietnamese Phoenix Program.
- [149] Smedberg, p. 196
- [150] According to one estimate by late 1968, of a total of 125,000 main force troops in the South, 85,000 were of North Vietnamese origin. Duiker, p. 303.
- [151] Arnold, pp. 87–88.
- [152] Arnold, p. 91. See also Karnow, 534.
- [153] Karnow, p. 536.
- [154] Arnold, pp. 86–87.
- [155] Nguyen, p. 35.
- [156] Doyle, Lipsman and Maitland, pp. 126–127.
- [157] Dougan and Weiss, p. 118.
- [158] Dougan and Weiss, p. 116.
- [159] Arnold, p. 90.
- [160] Zaffiri, p. 293.
- [161] Hoang, pp. 135–6.
- [162] Dougan and Weiss, p. 119.

- [163] Three of the four ARVN corps commanders, for example, were replaced for their dismal performance during the offensive.
- [164] Dougan and Weiss, p. 120.
- [165] Hoang, p. 142.
- [166] Dougan and Weiss, p. 126.
- [167] Dougan and Weiss, p. 127.
- [168] Hoang, p. 147.
- [169] Dougan and Weiss, p. 128.
- [170] Clifford, pp. 47–55.
- [171] Clifford, p. 479.
- [172] Smedberg, p. 195.
- [173] Palmer, p. 258.
- [174] Willbanks, pp. 148, 150.
- [175] Zaffiri, p. 304.
- [176] Westmoreland, p. 355.
- [177] Dougan and Weiss, p. 70.
- [178] *Pentagon Papers*, p. 594.
- [179] Westmoreland, p. 356.
- [180] Schmitz, p. 105.
- [181] Dougan and Weiss, p. 72. See also Zaffiri, p. 305.
- [182] Zaffiri, p. 308.
- [183] Clifford, p. 482. See also Zaffiri, p. 309.
- [184] Westmoreland, pp. 356–357.
- [185] Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1971, pp. 389–392.
- [186] Johnson, pp. 406–407.
- [187] Clifford, p. 485.
- [188] *Pentagon Papers*, p. 597.
- [189] The group included McNamara, General Maxwell D. Taylor, Paul H. Nitze (Deputy Secretary of Defense), Henry H. Fowler (Secretary of the Treasury), Nicholas Katzenbach (Undersecretary of State), Walt W. Rostow (National Security Advisor), Richard Helms (Director of the CIA), William P. Bundy (Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs), Paul Warnke (the Pentagon's International Security Affairs), and Philip C. Habib (Bundy's deputy).
- [190] *Pentagon Papers*, pp. 601–604.
- [191] *Pentagon Papers*, p. 604.
- [192] Clifford, p. 402.
- [193] Major General Phillip Davidson, Westmoreland's chief of intelligence, reflected how the military men thought about Clifford's conversion in his memoir: "Clifford's use of the Wise Men to serve his dovish ends was a consummate stroke by a master of intrigue...what happened was that Johnson had fired a doubting Thomas (McNamara) only to replace him with a Judas." Phillip Davidson, *Vietnam at War*. Novato CA: Presidio Press, 1988, p. 525.
- [194] Johnson, p. 399.
- [195] Johnson, p. 400.
- [196] *Pentagon Papers*, p. 623.
- [197] President Johnson was convinced that the source of the leak was Undersecretary of the Air Force Townsend Hoopes. Don Oberdorfer suggested that the *Times* pieced the story together from a variety of sources. Oberdorfer, pp. 266–270. Herbert Schandler concluded that the key sources included Senators who had been briefed by Johnson himself. Herbert Y. Schandler, *The Unmaking of a President*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977, pp. 202–205.
- [198] Oberdorfer p. 269.
- [199] Stephens, Bret, "American Honor", *Wall Street Journal*, January 22, 2008, p. 18.
- [200] Braestrup, 1:679f.
- [201] Braestrup, 1:687.
- [202] Johnson, p. 415.
- [203] Clifford, p. 507. The group consisted of Dean Acheson (former Secretary of State), George W. Ball (former Under Secretary of State), General Omar N. Bradley, Arthur H. Dean, Douglas Dillon, (former Secretary of State and the Treasury), Associate Justice Abe Fortas, Henry Cabot Lodge (twice Ambassador to South Vietnam), John J. McCloy (former High Commissioner of West Germany), Robert D. Murphy (former diplomat), General Taylor, General Matthew B. Ridgeway (U.S. Commander in the Korean War), and Cyrus Vance (former Secretary of Defense), and Arthur J. Goldberg (U.S. representative at the UN).
- [204] Karnow, p. 562.
- [205] Clifford, p. 516.
- [206] The four dissenters were Bradley, Murphy, Fortas, and Taylor. Karnow, p. 562, *Pentagon Papers*, p. 610.
- [207] *Pentagon Papers*, p. 609.
- [208] Clifford, p. 520.



- [209] Zaffiri, pp. 315–316. Westmoreland was "bitter" and was upset that he "had been made the goat for the war." Ibid. See also Westmoreland, pp. 361–362.
- [210] Sorley, p. 18.

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